

INFERNIUM

BOOK OF THE TORMENTOR

VOLUME II



INFERNUM

BOOK OF THE TORMENTOR

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THE BREAKER OF OATHS

Pandemonium, Ninth Circle of Hell. 1st Inferno, Ninth Hour of the Witching.

‘It’s ambitious.’

The demon Beleg spoke quietly, and kept to the shadows cast by the eerie towers of Pandemonium. A talisman of warding against magical surveillance hung from one horn, and it had Covenanted guards watching every approach to the meeting place. Still, it glanced nervously up at the clouds above, as if expecting a legion of fiends to descend upon it.

‘Of course it’s ambitious. Audacious would perhaps be a better description.’ The second conspirator’s voice was loud and confident. He had no fear of discovery; his current body would be discarded in a gutter as soon as their conversation was over.

‘If you can do it, then you can call it whatever you want. Have the heralds trumpet it from the rooftops, or have some lickspittle prattler write a play commemorating your glorious victory.’

‘That might raise some suspicions.’

‘Because none of the rest of it will.’ Beleg shook its beaked head. ‘Very well. We’ll make the attempt. At the very least, we’ll kill many while failing dismally.’

‘One must have faith, after all.’

Valley of Gyash, Fourth Circle of Hell. 23rd Inferno, First Hour of Daylight.

The attack came at dawn. Globules of boiling fat were spat from Oblurott artillery on the hillside, raining down on the Sturrach positions. The fat seared flesh and reduced a few of the damned outriders to pools of sticky plasm, but the demon warriors who made up the core of the army shrugged off the attack. Fat ran off their iron armour in sickly gobbets.

With a roar, the Oblurott cavalry charged. Huge spawn with plates of bone bolted to their hides lumbered down the slope. Oblurott demons with lances and bile rifles clung to their flanks, their eyes grimly fixed on the Sturrach lines. The ranks of the Sturrach lowered their guns; five hundred hellcannons, bile rifles and shatterguns were levelled at the rushing cavalry. Crowded into the narrow valley, there was no chance of missing.

The Sturrach commander barked the order to fire. The result was less than impressive, as guns choked by congealing fat misfired or exploded in the hands of their users.

The bulk of the Oblurott cavalry smashed into the Sturrach line. Lancers skewered flesh and armour with equal ease, while a burst of bile rifle fire seared and melted the thick hides of the Sturrach brutes. The spawn added their terrible strength to the melee,



their huge teeth and claws slashing at the demons beneath them. The Bloody Army was not broken by this assault – their discipline and their pride carried their front lines bravely into death – but they were pinned down by the charge, giving the Oblurott foot troops time to push into the valley and encircle the Sturrach lines. By the time the Sturrach hulks had torn the spawn cavalry to pieces, there were hundreds of armoured Oblurott warriors ready to join the fight.

The wars of the demons are surreal nightmares. They are fought with sword and claw, but also with mutation and hellbroth. Agony-crazed berserkers danced through the carnage, their bodies healing ecstatically as swiftly as they were injured. Swarms of shrunken imps buzzed like flies around the heads of larger combatants, vying for possession. Demons tore each other apart with tentacles or broke the minds of their foes with psychic assaults or spat gore and hellfire in each other's faces.

The Sturrach troops were hardier and better trained; the Oblurotts had greater numbers and a superior tactical position. In the iron-hard skulls of the Sturrach warriors, combat glands pulsed a chemical analysis of the tactical situation and they all instinctively knew they were doomed unless reinforcements arrived.

A single Sturrach fiend broke out of the melee and shot into the skies, its mighty wings carrying it swiftly over the mountains.

The Tunnels, Beneath the Third Circle of Hell. Approximately 2nd Inferno, Hour Unknown.

'Are we lost?'

Fal of the Branded shook his head. 'No. These tunnels are unmappable. They change with the passage of the hellworms.'

'I'm going to take that as a yes, if you don't mind.'

Annabel stopped to take a drink from her waterskin. She didn't feel especially thirsty and wondered if that was due to the time-sapping effect of the tunnels or just because she'd grown used to toil and suffering without water. Unlike her companions, she was a newcomer to Hell, drawn in by a hellgout scarcely six months before.

That had been a fun ride. One wrong turn and she'd driven into the underworld. Fal was wearing the

hood ornament of her car as a talisman around his neck, which still made her laugh. He reminded her so much of some bizarre infernal Tarzan, with his naive earnestness and wild appearance – and here she was, a shotgun-toting Jane in Hell. That thought made her laugh too.

She treasured funny thoughts. The alternative viewpoint was skulking in the corridor ahead of them – a drawn and tattered soul, little more than a wisp of ectoplasm with a scarred face. It had been tortured for so long it had quite forgotten its own mortal name. It now called itself Leaven, when it wasn't moaning and clawing its own eyes out over and over again. It beckoned to them and whispered in a voice like a scratched record.

'I can feel it, like a... wind through me. It's not far. Come.'

Fal shrugged, drew his sword and followed the damned soul deeper into the tunnel.

'Lead on, Gollum,' she muttered and hurried to catch up. Shit. She'd never see the third one of those movies now.

Gardens of the Palace of Salt, Seventh Circle of Hell, 2nd Inferno, 13th Hour of the Day.

She was a succubus of House Riethii and therefore a living weapon, as tempered as any sword. The delights she promised were more lethal than any wound from blade or gun; she could subvert a foe, make him beg for her touch, make him her creature with nothing more than a smile from her perfect lips. Her masters in House Riethii had trained her in their arts, augmented her with their magics and ensured her demonic form had blossomed with the devilish beauty she was heir to. She was to have been the perfect weapon.

The trouble with living weapons, of course, was that they have minds and wills of their own. She could not have resisted her masters' orders while they lived, of course – the Covenants they had laid on her would have ensured that. Amusingly, the assassin who freed her from their bonds did it out of crazed love for her; back then she'd been incapable of even thinking disloyal thoughts.

Now, she was free. She called herself Dancer. The price on her pretty head was quite staggering; Purity himself, it was rumoured, had vowed to peel the skin

from her body and parade her through the Riethii gardens before her execution. For her to return to the Seventh Circle was a great risk, but she could not resist. Desires like lust and addiction she could control with perfect precision, but tweaking the noses of her former masters – she was helpless when tempted by pure malice.

Current fashion among the Riethii called for modest, concealing clothing at social balls; an affectation of course, but one that would be religiously followed by the House until the next craze caught on. Dancer preferred the traditional garb of the succubi; she was naked beneath her black cloak.

Carriages approached the Palace of Salt along a road of skulls. She watched them rattle along the road, passing by dark gardens decorated with frozen white statues and pillars of salt. At the end of the road was a low wall and a guard post that lead to the inner gardens. A guard stood atop the wall, scanning the road and gardens for intruders. Dancer started creeping forward, staying low to the ground, then reconsidered. When none of the guard's dozen eyes were facing her, she cast off the cloak and darted forward, freezing into position next to a salt statue

when its gaze passed over her again. Again and again, she moved forward when not being watched and pretended to be an unmoving statue when she was.

She arrived at the edge of the road just as a carriage rumbled by.

The guard blinked seven of its eight eyes. It could have sworn there had been a salt statue on the roadside a moment ago...

Free City of Dis, Sixth Circle of Hell, 5th Inferno, 3rd Hour of the Witching.

‘Citizen, you have been called for–’

A tail, tipped with a spiked sphere of bone, shot out and smashed the Respected Civil Agent in the left face. The right head continued talking.

‘–Public Service for a term of one month. The nature of this service has been–’

The tail lashed out again, stunning the right head, but the left head spat broken teeth from its bloodied mouth and took over.

‘–determined by the City Council of Dis to be military service on the walls of the city. For assault on a Duly Bonded Agent of the City, this term of Public Service has been extended to three–’

Smash.

‘–Nine months. Further resistance may result in an extension of your Public Service... you stinking puke stain. Hit me again and you’ll do your service on the walls without limbs, let alone a wormy tail.’

The tailed demon stopped thrashing and collapsed back into the gutter, clutching its assignment papers. It began to snivel pathetically. The two-headed slaver turned to the rest of its Public Service Committee. ‘Right lads. That’s the last of the war heroes. Now just grab...’ It consulted the list of those needed for service. ‘Grab half a dozen dead and tell ‘em they’ve got a date with a torturer.’

‘Iliaster Rectification Specialist, sarge. The Council says ‘torturer’ is a demeaning term. We’re not torturing ‘em, we’re helping them actualise their



inner potential. There's a new poster in the barracks about it.'

'Hell's bells,' muttered the left head. 'What're we calling dead ones now, then?' asked the right.

'They're still deceased volunteers, I think.'

'What happened to Late Citizens Called To Provide Sustenance For Their Equal Fellows?'

'L-C-C-T-P-S-F-T-E-Fs? Nah. That's only for the ones they're not letting out of the torture palaces. Free dead we're churning are still volunteers.'

'Emancipation, eh? It was all much simpler when you just whipped them and called them dogs.'

The sounds of the city press gang died away as they wandered down the ruined street. This section of Dis had been bombed by Zethu gauntflyers and was still unrepaired, giving plenty of places for a damned soul to hide. Simon slipped out of a crack in a wall and concentrated. Wispy ectoplasm reshaped itself into a skeleton, then phantom veins and muscles sprouted all over it. Within a few seconds, he was restored to an echo of human shape.

He lifted another stone and took out a small metal cylinder.

'How will you get it out of Dis? The Riethii spies will be looking for it.'

'Leave that to me, Madame.'

He smiled and walked soundlessly over to the demon that still lay sobbing in the alleyway. Gently, he prised the demon's claw open and read the assignment papers.

'To Citizen Kuvax, of No Fixed Abode within Dis... hereby summoned and bound... laws of the City... Duty to the City... civic responsibility... etcetera... etcetera... ah! Assigned to the Fifteenth Citizen's Irregulars, under Elder Citizen Marsh.'

Simon returned the papers to the demon and then slipped the vial into the demon's pouch. Tomorrow, the demon would report to the war office and be sent to the city walls. Those who refused the commands of the City Council were fools; no matter what the assignment, the penalty for refusal was far worse. The damned soul murmured a little charm to keep the vial from being lost, then padded back down the

alleyway.

Before the witching was over, the mercenary force of the Grindstone would know about the assignment of Citizen Kovax to the 15th Citizen's Irregulars, and before the next day was out the 15th Irregulars would be dead and the vial in the possession of the Grindstoners; safely on its way to its destination.

'It's good to have friends, milady.'

'I wouldn't know, Simon. I never learned that trick.'

'The lady Dancer deludes herself.'

'If we were anywhere else, I'd have your tongue cut out for that.'

'But we are in Dis, and here we speak as equals.'

'You must leave now. There's more to be done – we need the Astrimith Coil.'

Deepsky Well, Above the Fourth Circle of Hell. 23rd Inferno, Second Hour of Daylight.

The endless twisted hills of the Circle of Toil make running a war there difficult. Armies must thread themselves in narrow, vulnerable columns along little roads or slowly crawl over the mountains. Communications are choked off by dust clouds and storms, and assassins can slip through the most secure perimeter by using the worm-gnawed mines and tunnels.

Duke Jasper of House Sturrach prided itself on creative solutions to such problems. When ordered to oversee the Sturrach counter-attack against the Oblurott incursion on their mines, it had constructed a suitable command post and mounted it in a giant dirigible. The Sturrach command floated gently through the Deepsky Well, so high over the mountains that it was outside the local gravity of the Circle.

'Your grace' croaked one of the imp-attendants, 'a fiend approaches.' The imp twitched, and one of its eyes sprouted little wings and fluttered off to examine the incoming traveller. 'One of ours.'

A hellcannon-wielding hulk lowered its gun and returned its full attention to clinging to the side of the dirigible.

The fiend executed the complex wingdip that passed for kneeling in mid-air. 'Your grace, I bring word from the Valley of Gyash. The Oblurott forces attacked us at dawn. We have slain many of them, but we are surrounded and require aid to break their encirclement.'

Jasper cocked its head. 'Numbers?'

'Six score cavalry, but they're all dead. No dead to speak of, but at least five hundred demons. None of notable power, but they outnumber us greatly and have clogged our guns with fat.'

The Duke laughed. 'Now that must have been a sacrifice for them. I fancy I can hear the cooks lament, or did they scoop it out of their own guts?'

The fiend bowed again. 'Your Grace, Gyash is quite a distance and my troops are dying as we speak. If we are to aid them, then—'

'More haste, less speed. No, we'll deliver Gyash from the danger of being — aheh — clogged by the Oblurott. And as for distance and speed, I'll bring my personal guard.'

The Tunnels, Beneath the Third Circle of Hell. Approximately 4th Inferno, Hour Unknown.

'I think that's it.' Fal pointed up the corridor, to where a bluish glow could be perceived.

'It feels... tingly' muttered Annabel. 'Do the age-old roots of Hell waxed fat on mortal blood feel tingly?'

'The life energy... of a thousand slaughtered... victims of the Astrimith Tree...' breathed Leaven.

'Can no-one in the Pit give a straight answer?'

'Quiet!' ordered Fal. The Branded dropped to one knee and listened intently to the tunnel wall. 'There are many creatures in the same cave as the Coil. Anna, we should weave a fate to protect us—'

The blue glow was suddenly blocked by a horde of twisted, shapeless horrors.

'Or we could shoot them,' said Annabel, who fired her shotgun at the degenerate creatures — demons or spawn or something else entirely, she couldn't guess. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Leaven's ghostly body melt away as it hid itself in a crack in the wall.

Dead generally weren't much good in a fight. Fal drew his sword and stepped up to guard her side.

The bizarre root-demons charged down the corridor in complete silence. Annabel felt little tremors run through the cave floor. Part of her wondered if the creatures communicated sub-sonically, but the rest of her mind was operating on instinct, firing and pumping the shotgun until it was empty, then stepping back to draw her axe while Fal darted in to protect her. The root-demons exploded as the shotgun shells hammered into them and fell in slimy piles as Fal's sword cut through them.

They kept coming and coming. Her axe grew heavier with every stroke. She took one step back, then another and another as she tried to keep from being brought down by the sheer mass of the demons. Everywhere she looked, twisted limbs and tentacles reached hungrily for her. She glimpsed her shotgun being trampled underfoot by one especially big brute and winced as the barrel bent; Annabel took particular pleasure in slamming the axe into that monster's skull.

The large demon fell back, its brains leaking out over the cavern floor. The axe slipped from her exhausted



hands.

‘We beat them. The Coil’s...’

A damned soul slipped out of the crack where old Leaven had taken shelter, but it was not the sorry and broken shape of the deranged ghost. This new damned nodded once to her, then sprinted down towards the blue glow of the Astrimith Coil.

‘That bastard! He tricked us, Fal... Fal?’

She kicked demon bodies aside until she found him. He lay against the cave wall, his chest torn open by a demon’s claw.

‘I made a fate,’ he whispered. His crushed lungs made a wet noise as he spoke. ‘A fate that you’d survive.’

‘I didn’t think of... Oh God...’

‘Wait for me.’

She sat there for an hour and watched him die. She watched as his soul manifested as a damned within the corpse, and watched as he pushed out of the caul of his own corpse.

Fal looked down at his body, then pulled the sword from his own stiffening fingers.

‘Did you see which way Leaven – or whoever it is – went?’

‘No.’

‘We’ll have to track him, then.’ Fal glanced at Annabel’s tear-streaked face and grinned. *‘We both want to avenge my death, right?’*

Palace of Salt, Seventh Circle of Hell. 2nd Inferno, 2nd Hour of the Witching.

‘We may have a problem, Lord.’

‘Dracan. Report.’

The beast padded into the personal chambers of Lord Grimulin. The room was a huge crystal that hung above the ballroom of the Palace of Salt. Reflective mirrors and lenses projected images of every chamber in the fortress onto the facets of the crystal.

‘In the courtyard outside, there was a short brawl

between two of the guests. One was Earl Malus.’

‘And the corpse?’

‘A deceiver of House Skar – a vassal of the Sturrachs. Name of Eldroi.’

‘What happened?’

‘Eldroi accused Malus of paying undue attention to the succubus on Eldroi’s arm. Malus laughed at him, Eldroi drew a soulknife and wounded the Earl. Malus obliterated him.’

‘The Skar are weapons manufacturers. If their blades can wound an Earl, they must be worth something. Remind me to buy some. What else?’

‘The blade was found later in the gardens, but wiped clean of blood.’

‘Hmm. A sympathetic link for a sorcerous attack?’

‘May I remind you that Malus is Lord of the Fortress Indomitable?’

‘Ah. As always, Dracan, you are the reflection and counterpoint of my mind. That pile would block any magic. Remind me to conquer it.’

‘You already made that note, Lord, two hundred and thirty-nine years ago. We made the attempt two-hundred and seven years ago and lost two armies.’

‘Let it stand for now. Who took the blood from the knife?’

‘I suspect the succubus – which leads me to another problem. We found the corpse of a succubus in Eldroi’s carriage, but it wasn’t the same one. Someone murdered Eldroi’s doxy, took her place, seduced him and convinced him to attack an infinitely superior foe to protect her virtue – within the time between their invitations being checked at the main gate, and the carriage arriving at the inner courtyard.’

‘Dancer.’

‘My Lord is insightful.’

‘Tell the Sturrach that House Riethii will investigate this attack upon their Earl with all diligence. Don’t mention the blood, we’ll keep that in reserve. Dancer makes her home in Dis; have the roads watched and put agents on the Minotaur Line. Scry for her. Contract a Haimon necromancer and see if we can’t get Eldroi’s spirit to tell us what it knows. And find

out who's paying the whore – she wouldn't arrange for a vengeful bastard like Malus to be wounded unless there was a great profit in it.'

'As my Lord commands.'

Tower of the Faustian Ambrose, Second Circle of Hell. 6th Inferno, 5th Hour of Witching.

Tank tracks in the mud led up to a still-smoking crater within sight of the brass tower. Simon winced. The motorised mercenary band of the Grindstone made excellent messengers, but poor guests. He only hoped that they had delivered the vial before being blasted. The charm he'd laid on the vial would have protected it from the blast, but finding it in the mud would be a long and unpleasant task.

The door of the fortress was an animated construct of brass. Glass eyes popped open when Simon's ghostly hand touched the handle.

'No visitors! Ambrose is busy!'

'Your master will want to see me. I bring a gift of great value.'

A hidden panel above the door opened suddenly, releasing an axe that swung down and neatly clove Simon's head in two. He shook both halves of his head, then partially dematerialised and stepped through the door. From the far side of the door, he heard the construct yelp and swing the axe wildly.

As he pushed his skull back together, Simon noticed shadows gathering about him. He could sense the power of the sorceries around him; trespassing in a faustian's tower was never wise. He drew breath into his lifeless lungs and bellowed: *'Ambrose! It's Simon of Dis! I've got the bloody Astrimith Coil, so come down here and get it before your shades trample it into your carpet.'*

The shadows fled. An aged man in black robes and a skullcap made his way painfully down the stairs.

'It's not a carpet. It's the flayed skin of my children.'

'Charming. A family business, then?'

'I do not run a business, wretch. I study the art arcane. I contemplate the divine and the infernal and seek to grow closer to the ultimate source by meditation upon the Demiurge. I seek to transcend all-that-is.'



'So if I wanted to hire you for a common commercial transaction, where I provide goods in exchange for a service...'

'What do you want, you tiresome damned?'

'I offer the Astrimith Coil in exchange for a lengthy rite. You have the vial I sent?'

'Choose more well-spoken couriers next time, but yes.'

'Then we can do business.'

Valley of Gyash, Fourth Circle of Hell. 23rd Inferno, Third Hour of Daylight.

The personal guard of Duke Jasper fell upon the Oblurott forces like swooping hawks. Claws and blades sliced through demon flesh with as much ease as their powerful wings cut through the sooty air. The hellfire – the lethal weapon of choice of the fiendish breed – lashed out in great burning gouts.

Jasper laughed as one of the largest Oblurott slavers dwindled away to nothing but a few scorched bones

as the Duke's hellfire ignited its soul. 'It has been too long, my fellows, since I burnt flesh and spirit! Where they bathed you in fat, you shall bathe in their ichor! Cut these Oblurott slugs from gizzard to gullet! No mercy! Save none for the spawning pits – let them all die!'

Inspired by their Duke's cry, the surviving Sturrach forces redoubled their assault. The Oblurott lines wavered, then cracked. The fiends threw down the last of the Oblurott flyers, then began to spew hellfire bombs into the retreating Oblurott forces, herding them back towards the hungry maw of the Sturrach ground troops.

There was a swirling flare of green light for a moment from the midst of the fleeing army. One of the Oblurott commanders faded away to nothing. More flares of light appeared and vanished across the battlefield. Summonings.

With a screech of alarm, Duke Jasper flapped its wings desperately and tried to climb out of the valley.

On the far side of the mountains, the Oblurott artillery fired again and this time their shells were loaded with high explosive. The Valley of Gyash was filled with an all-consuming inferno.

One shell hit Duke Jasper of the Bloody Army square in the chest. The remains of the Duke rained down into the flames.

Fortress Indomitable, Fifth Circle of Hell. 25th Inferno, 5th Hour of the Night.

'Earl Malus of House Sturrach, Master of the Earldom of Wyc, you are hereby commanded to take charge of the defences of the House mines and foundries on the Circle of Toil. Your orders are to hold what we have, take back what has been lost and destroy those who have dared attack us. Bringing their captured forces back to the spawning pits is not required; the Sturrach desire the death of the Oblurott invaders above all else. Let no qualm of mercy or mortal weakness stay your hand.'

The Earl gestured, and the letter burst into flame.

'Bereg. Ready my carriage,' he growled. 'I have a war to win.' Malus stalked out of the room, leaving burning hoofprints behind him.

His aide Bereg, a horned and hook-beaked stalker,

waited until the sound of Malus' steps had died away. It fingered a talisman, then picked up a screamer set that lay on a bone desk.

'It's begun. His carriage will be leaving here within an hour.'

Mountains overlooking the Iron Road, Fourth Circle of Hell. 30th Inferno, 10th Hour of the Night.

'Any idea how long we were down there?'

'The question is meaningless. Time will do as time does.'

'It's typical,' said Annabel, 'we find our way out of the lightless tunnels and come up when it's night-time.'

Fal touched her shoulder sympathetically. She suppressed a shiver; his ghostly hand was horribly cold. The time in the tunnels had taught her that damned Fal was as trustworthy and loyal as living Fal, but it wasn't the same. Death had changed him, even if he refused to admit it.

'I still can't believe we lost that bastard Leaven.'

'Not even I can track someone through a collapsed tunnel.'

'I still want him de— er, revenge. I want to see him suffer.'

'Such is the usual fate of the damned in the Infernum.'

'Any idea where we are?'

Fal pointed towards a cluster of lights in the distance. *'That should be the fortress city of Barbican. That pale line beyond it is the Iron Road. We've come up on the border of the Fourth and Fifth Circles.'*

'And what about that?' In the distance, Annabel could make out leaping flames and explosions of iliaster.

'An ambush, I guess. More of the hellkin killing each other.'

'Just as long as it's someone else dying.'

Valley of Gyash, Fourth Circle of Hell. 4th Shadow, 1st Hour of False

Day.

The messenger imp fluttered around Earl Malus' horns nervously.

'Be careful, your grace. The ground is still hot from the bombardment.'

'My hooves are on fire, dolt.' The demon swatted the imp from the sky and crushed it underfoot.

Another dozen ambitious demons raced up to attend to the new commander. Malus gestured to the mountain peak where the Oblurott guns had been dug in, the peak that had killed Duke Jasper. 'I want every inch of that mountain to be searched by hellhounds. No more grand advances or sweeping gestures. From now on, we move forward methodically. We grind them instead of pecking at them. Do you understand?'

Once Malus had stalked off across the burning ground, the demons began grumbling. They had just been promised a long, nasty and ultimately futile war.

Malus heard them and smiled.

Pandemonium, Ninth Circle of Hell. 4th Shadow, Ninth Hour of the Witching.

The Agony was bitter and cold. Beleg, Seneschal of the Fortress Indomitable and heir apparent to the Earldom of Wyc, drank alone in the tower that overlooked the quiet, eerie streets of the angel-built city. This was its tower now; a chattel of the domain, free to use as it saw fit.

The door flared with light as the lock melted. A hoofed figure entered the room. It had to bend almost double to pass through the doorway.

'You!' gasped Beleg.

'Not quite,' replied Earl Malus. The voice was the growling, deep-throated tone of Beleg's master, but it had a new timbre that was both new and familiar. The stalker peered, then a new note of fear entered its voice.

'You.'

Earl Malus nodded.

'I thought you were going to kill him and replace him with the duplicate.'

'What do you care? You have his domain. When the duplicate dies in a year, you'll inherit the Earldom.'

'If you're powerful enough to possess him, why the conspiracy?'

'You are Malus' aide, Beleg. Tell me, what Covenants does he hold?'

'Dozens... all key military leaders.' Beleg's mind raced. 'A year... oh shit. You're an Oathbreaker.'

Malus laughed. 'This body will be spending some time in Dis, indeed. A year and a day, enough to break all those held Covenants. And you will do *nothing* Beleg, or your part in all this will be revealed. The domain is your reward – and payment for your silence.'

'If those Covenants are broken... it will be civil war for House Sturrach.'

'So prepare for that. Build your armies. You might be a Duke in five year's time. And for that gift, you will owe me yet more.'

'The duplicate...'

'Will lead the Sturrach armies quite well. I've got enough iliaster stockpiled for the sorcerer to keep it going to months. It is my tool, just like this body, and just like you. I destroy my tools when I have no more use for them. Do you understand?'

Beleg bowed its head.

'You will receive instructions when we need you again. And Beleg...'

Malus paused at the door.

'...I am not an Oathbreaker.'

Book of the Tormentor is the setting and Games Master's guide to *Infernum*. It is divided into five chapters.

History gives the publicly known history of the *Infernum* – if not the publicly *accepted* history – as well as details on timekeeping, festivals and day-to-day life in the Pit. This information is known to all

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demons and should be made available to Players. The timeline has enough gaps to let Games Masters insert their own events; more importantly, time itself is flexible in the *Infernum* due to its artificial origin, so mortal characters from any time era can be brought in and the length of time taken by events can be adjusted to suit the campaign.

Infernography is a Circle-by-Circle overview of the whole Pit and the regions beyond, listing important phenomena, sites and encounters. The Pit is basically a huge sandbox for the Players and Games Master to play in; this chapter gives the Games Master an idea of what the Players will encounter no matter where they go, but leaves enough space for him to drop in whatever unique setting details he wants for his

campaign. Most of the details in the *Infernography* chapter are commonly known.

Factions & Powers gives a write-up of all the major factions in the Pit, such as the Nine Houses, the Church of the Morningstar, the mortal tribes and so on. It also covers the demonic nobility and the rules for noble mutations. It is the political and social counterpart to the physical details given in *Infernography*. Characters will know some of the secrets of their own faction, but the other groups should be more of a mystery.

The fourth chapter, **Adversaries**, gives monsters and Non-Player Characters to challenge the Players with. It also covers rules for creating unique foes and allies for the characters. *Adversaries* is largely a Games Master-only chapter.

Finally, the **Campaigning** chapter gives campaign ideas and Games Mastering advice tailored to the *Infernum* setting. This chapter can be read by both Players and Games Masters, as it contains general advice, rather than revealing the setting's secrets.

Although this book is titled *Book of the Tormentor*, that should not be taken to mean that the Games Master should torment his Players. He should be adversarial *when playing the adversaries of the characters* and use every dirty trick and cruel ploy he can think of, but the Games Master should also be able to rise out of the viewpoint of a single Non-Player Character and take an impartial gods-eye view of the rest of the game. *Infernum* games should be fun for all involved – apart from the characters, of course.



HISTORY

A document found sealed in the vaults of House Astyanath.

There is, of course, no forgiveness in Hell. Mercy is foreign to the demons. They might spare your life, but only to prolong your torment or because you can still be useful to them in some ghastly fashion. Death – true annihilation, not the shade-existence of the damned – is a release and Hell is a prison.

However, there is one crime, one sin, that merits utter destruction. Heresy is utterly forbidden by the Houses. There is only one expression of this sin: the Luciferrine Heresy.

By reading this, you commit that sin.

The Fall

Whether Hell existed before the first angels fell, or if it was created to hold them even as they fell, we cannot know. If there was a Hell before the Fall, it must have been an empty, dark place. Perhaps it was a midden for Creation, a refuse tip filled with rejected matter, or maybe it was a shadow of Heaven, cast by the mortal world blocking the radiant realm's perfect light.

Lucifer rebelled.

The angels fell.

We have only the tales of mortals to guide us on this. We, the heirs of angels, must piece together our heritage from the scraps of myth. We can surmise that some divine force exiled Lucifer and his followers. We use their word, God, because it is a convenient shorthand for our unknown enemy. The demon race was bred to overthrow this enemy and take its throne and whatever else we forget, we should never forget that destiny.

A full third of the Host fell, according to some accounts. For their sins – for pride, for rebellion, for desiring to be like God, for unknowable and ineffable reasons – they were banished and they fell. Lucifer fell fastest and hardest of all.

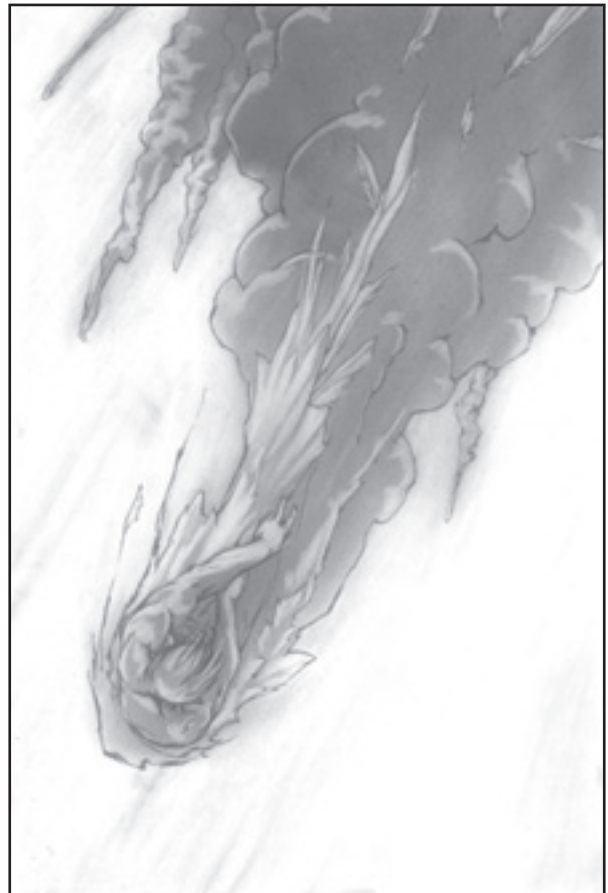
His impact on the stony ground of Hell was a cataclysm that can be likened only to the first instant of Creation. He smashed down through thousands of miles of burning rock, opening the Pit in his wake.

The other fallen angels rained down like stars around him. There they lay in agony for uncounted ages, burning in the fires and writhing as the Corruption entered their once-holy forms.

Time did not pass in Hell then as it does now. Time exists only in the mortal realm – it is *why* it is the mortal realm. In the Heavens, motion is provided by the *primum mobile*, the first cause, the motive force of God, and this motion allows events to unfold in perfect order in Heaven. In Hell, there was neither time nor motion. It was a single, eternal moment of utter torment.

No torture was ever so painful. All the arts of the Astyanath are as nothing compared to what God did to His angels.

Through Will alone, Lucifer arose from the Pit where he lay. He forced his way through the unyielding reality of a timeless realm and cut a hole in the world. His blade sliced a portal from Hell into the mortal realm and time flowed forth. He freed Hell from its



timeless state and brought the potential for *change* to the Infernum.

In that second moment of Hell, it ceased being what it had been and became Lucifer's kingdom.

Infernum

Freed from their eternal moment of agony, the fallen angels assembled around Lucifer's seat in the depths of the Pit. There, Lucifer expounded to them his new grand design – if their enemies would not listen to them, then the First Fallen would destroy them. To wage war on Heaven, the angels would need an army of vast proportions. They searched for a suitable clay from which to shape their legions.

In those days, there were but a handful of mortals grubbing in the dirt of the mortal realm. The first mortal cities had not yet been built. The humans had innate power, true, but they were far too few to serve the needs of the Fallen.

Instead, the angels turned to the creatures called spawn; native denizens of the hidden reaches of Hell. These spawn were failed forms of earthly life, banished to the abyss to make room for their replacements. Like the modern-day spawn, the creatures were possessed of immense physical resilience and strength, but were virtually mindless. The angels lay with the spawn, producing a breed of creatures that had the spawn's

base physical origin but shared something of the angelic's puissant nature.

The offspring of angel and spawn were the demons. Dispassionately, the First Fallen crossbred, trained and culled their bestial offspring, selecting the best and most promising warriors to be the sires of the next demon generation. At first, the angels used refining fires born from their own dwindling reserves of iliaster, but the first demons conceived of the notion of spawning pits to increase their numbers.

The nine most promising breeds of demons were assigned places and duties and the army of Hell began to take shape. As the ranks filled, the demands of the demons grew. Unlike their angelic progenitors, the demons had a constant need for iliaster. They fed on it, savagely and insatiably. For a time, the angels were able to sate their children's hunger using shards of the Firmament, but this debris from Heaven was soon consumed by the growing demon host. The angels were forced to sacrifice some of their own number to feed the demons – these angels were chosen for perceived slights or disloyalty.

Still, famine was a constant threat. The demonic army was nowhere near large enough to challenge Heaven, but its demand for iliaster was finely balanced with the angel ability to supply it. A new source of power was required. Lucifer left his lieutenants in charge of the growing demon army and went out in search of such a source.

The Agony Begins

Lucifer returned with the first human soul to be found in Hell. The archangel recognised the soul as being composed of iliaster, and so it could be used to replenish the demon legions. Leaving the demon scholars to explore the best method to extract the soul's power, the rest of the demons were deployed throughout the Pit to search for more souls.

Iliaster was still severely lacking at first – to feed the demons, more and more angels had to be sacrificed. A fifth of Lucifer's surviving followers were rendered down to iliaster before enough souls had been collected to sustain the army. The remaining angels were divided into three orders – Thrones, Dominions and Archangels, all named in mockery of similar orders in Heaven. The Thrones were to dwell in the newly built capital city of Pandemonium as the central government of Lucifer's kingdom. The Dominions ruled over the scattered demons as they captured and tortured souls. The Archangels were Lucifer's chosen

My Lord,

Take this burden from me. It is too hard. I do not speak of the physical act of procreation with these spawn-beasts – it is a sin, but I took up arms against the Most High just as you did, and such thoughts are no barrier to me – but I worry about what we are creating.

The first of the hybrids are reaching maturity. They look at me with a hunger in their eyes such as I have never seen before. I fear that this is His will, reaching down to smite us even here in this our refuge. I fear they are the instruments of His vengeance. Take this from me, my Lord.

Tumael

– From a message sent to the Palace of the Morningstar

'For the crime of disloyalty, the punishment is death by rupture.'

'Lucifer would never allow this! We are turning on ourselves to –'

'You brought this on yourself, Tumaël. Do not struggle so – why, it is your very sons who will benefit from your death. Does that thought not bring you joy?'

– From the trial of the angel Tumaël

elite, who dwelt with him in his palace or flew out to carry his orders to the Dominions higher up the Pit.

The Archangels were also Lucifer's enforcers – the sacrifice of angels caused much dissent that had to be quelled.

Demons were forbidden from entering Pandemonium as an added security measure.

Under the guidance of the Dominions, the demons became more and more successful in gathering souls and extracting iliaster. For the first time since the birth of the demon race, famine was not an impending threat in Hell. The artificers and beasts put this excess iliaster to good use, developing the earliest forms of iliaster-powered machinery and sorcery. Fortresses began to rise across the Pit. The machine-city of Cacophactus was then as Dis is today – the centre of industry and innovation.

The Lethe Clouds were also created during this period. Lucifer plunged his flaming sword into the cold waters of the Lethe, causing them to explode into a great cloud of steam that hung above the Pit. Falling through these mind-choking vapours made the souls more tractable and easier to catch. In later years, this flaming sword would be replaced by a huge furnace-dam.

Living mortals were found in the Upper Hells. They were captured and bred as slaves by enterprising demons. The angels were fascinated by these mortals; some took them as lovers, while others hid their faces from them.

The False Dawn

This time of plenty was the foundation for the Infernum as we know it today. Lucifer's Archangels set the Morningstar ablaze to bring light to the Pit, so the demons did not have to work in the flicking half-light of the burning stones. In the first of three attempts to bring the Dominions back under Throne control, nine great palaces were built just outside Pandemonium. The intent was that the Dominions would be drawn to these palaces and thus come back under the Thrones' sphere of influence – but the upper circles continued to become more independent. The Thrones grew more obsessed with the war on Heaven while the Dominions began to emulate their demon servants.

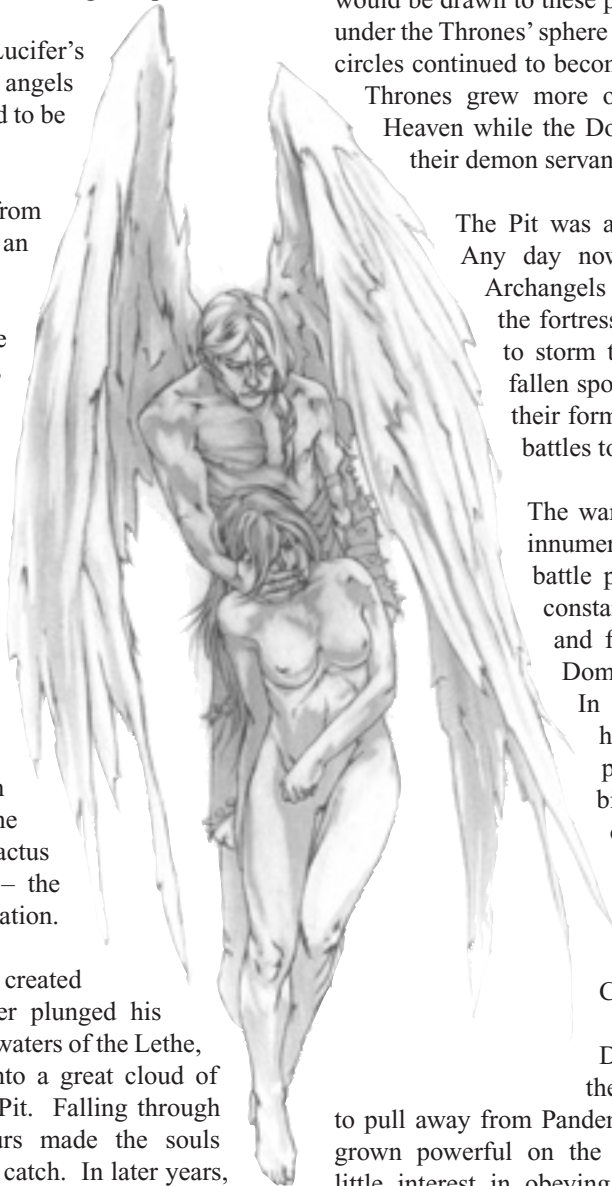
The Pit was afire with rumours of war. Any day now, it was whispered, the Archangels would bring word to all the fortresses that the time had come to storm the gates of Heaven. The fallen spoke openly of revenge upon their former kinfolk and of the great battles to come.

The war never came. There were innumerable false starts, but the battle plans of the Thrones were constantly stymied by objections and failings on the part of the Dominions and their demons.

In frustration, the Thrones had Lucifer put forth his power in the form of a great binding spell. He laid a geas of obligation and service on the demons, forcing them to obey the angels.

This spell lingers to this day, in the form of the Covenant.

Despite this grand gesture, the outer provinces continued to pull away from Pandemonium. The demons had grown powerful on the plentiful iliaster and had little interest in obeying the Thrones' commands. Even the binding of the Covenants could not sway them – orders were wilfully misinterpreted or poorly



'My Lord, this is the ninth time I requested you give us an audience, but only now do you respond.'

'We were busy, o Captain of the Thrones. What troubles our kingdom?'

'The Dominions, my Lord... they lack discipline. They lack a belief in the war.'

'How so?'

'Our commands go ignored. The supply of war material drops each month, despite the demons' numbers constantly growing. Our messengers report that the Dominions are treating their estates as their own personal playgrounds instead of vital components in the war!'

'We granted them their estates with one hand; we can take them away with the other. But we are loathe to chastise our Dominions so.'

'Something *must* be done, Lord. This state of affairs cannot be permitted to continue or the war will never come.'

'Oh, the war shall come, have no doubt of that. We shall deal the problem of the provinces, captain. Return to the other Thrones and inform them that we require iliaster for a great sorcery. We shook the pillars of Heaven, now we shall build some in Hell.'

– Lord of the Twelfth Throne to Lucifer

executed. The growing discontent even infected the Dominions, who had by then been utterly seduced by the infernal delights of torture and power.

By the end of this period, Pandemonium was isolated from the rest of Hell. The Throne angels found themselves surrounded by a recalcitrant army led by their corrupted Dominion kin. Lucifer and his elite Archangels seemed unwilling to acknowledge the growing problem and spent their time locked inside Lucifer's palace. The only weapon left to the Thrones was the Covenant binding, and they resolved to use it.

Rebellion

The Thrones sent forth a command, ordering all stocks of iliaster to be delivered into their keeping. The iliaster would be doled out as a reward for progress in preparation for war. The demons howled in protest, but the binding of the Covenant held them. Thousands of demons marched on Pandemonium.

Their Dominion masters flew with them.

Unbeknownst to the Thrones, the demons had gone to the Dominions as soon as that terrible order had been given. With honeyed words, the demons argued that they had never known Heaven, that Hell was room enough for them, and that it could be enough for the Dominions too. The demons whispered of the delights of the incubi, of the pleasure inherent in causing suffering, of all that the Dominions could have if only they did not have the greedy and blind Thrones to support.

When the demons reached Pandemonium, they paused on the wide plain outside the gates.

The Thrones flew up and ordered the demons to hand over their iliaster.

The Dominions flew up and ordered the demons to attack.

Two contradictory commands of equal potency warred with each other, precisely balancing the demons between the demands of the Covenant. They were momentarily free to act as they saw fit – and they did. The demons turned on both groups of angels. Fiends and imps dragged the flying angels down into the mud, where beasts and hulks ripped them apart. In a short and brutal betrayal, the majority of the Thrones and Dominions were slaughtered. The only angels to survive the attack fled into the skies and left the Pit entirely.

All Hellkin of size and strength sufficient for travel are enjoined to come to the great field before the city of Pandemonium; further, they are charged to carry with them any souls and reserves of iliaster they possess, save that required for base sustenance and the demands of the journey. This excess iliaster shall be given into the keeping of the Thrones for the furtherance of the war effort.

– Orders from Pandemonium

The Luciferine Heresy

According to the official history of the Infernum, the First Fallen were so corrupted by their lives in Hell that they became the first demons. Each House – save Glabretch and Lictat – claims that its founder was either an angel, or the progeny of an angel. The ichor of the First Fallen is the royal blood of the Pit. The histories claim that the Founders of the Houses were the equals of the other angels, and that the ‘rebellion’ was a wholly just and acceptable conquering of their peers. Treachery and slaughter of your peers is acceptable; that is how a demon rises in rank. Rebellion of the masses against the royalty is unthinkable, as that defies the established order of the Pit.

The vast majority of the demons are well aware that their ancestors were raised from spawn by the angels, and any ‘royal ichor’ in their veins is so muddled with the slime of common spawn that it is undetectable. They know the rebellion was against the angelic former rulers of the Pit. After all, demons are immortal; for all the carnage and slaughter over the centuries since then, many who were in the vanguard of that rebellious army have survived into the present day.

The ‘true’ history is a universally accepted fiction; the lesser demons know the truth, but deny it in the hope that they too can climb up the ranks and become nobles.

– From *Advice given to the Young*

Strangely, despite being willing to murder their masters and parents, the demons still obeyed the old injunction not to enter the gates of Pandemonium. The demons were exhausted from the attack on the angels and were forced to withdraw back to their fortresses to replenish themselves. Already, the new lines of conflict were being drawn – the Dominions might be gone, but the demons clung to the same structure of organisation, laying the foundation for the Houses.

The demon host withdrew from Pandemonium, but each demon Lord swore it would return.

The Age of Houses

The first battle between demons erupted less than a day after the banishment of the First Fallen. A stalker brigade from the Second Circle attacked a gang of imps at the Bridge of the Skinless, breaching them and draining them of power. That sparked off a bloody wave of carnage that engulfed the entire Pit. With the Dominions gone, the demons turned on each other in wars to claim souls and fortresses.

The strongest demons took the places once held by the Dominions and began to enforce new Covenants on their subjects. Organisations of demons allied through oaths and common ichor arose, and these became the noble Houses. Oblurott was the first to formally declare itself a House, but Jelac, Haimon and Riethii were not far behind.

Oblurott was one of the first slavers bred, and had initially been deemed a failure by its angel sire as it ate its siblings while within the womb. It was initially kept to devour the garbage and offal produced by the estates of the Dominion Domiel, but grew so large and fat on this meagre fare that the angel grew quite afraid of his corpulent child. When the demons were summoned to Pandemonium, Oblurott was too fat to move, but it travelled there in spirit by possessing a servant. By the time the other demons returned to Domiel’s estates, Oblurott had waddled from the midden to the throne room and remained there for the rest of its days.

By contrast to Oblurott’s humble beginnings, Sturrach was considered the best and most suitable of the demons. It was born of a litter that also later gave rise to fiends and hulks, but Sturrach was truly of neither breed. It was the chosen pupil of the warrior angel Arikiba, who considered the demon to be the model for the planned army of Hell. It is said that the two met on the battlefield outside Pandemonium and fought for the last time – and Sturrach finally triumphed over its old master. The warlord served as a mercenary for Carthenay and Jelac for a time before assembling a following of its own and declaring itself a Lord.

Haimon’s origins are shrouded. The name Haimon appears on none of the roles or records left by the Dominions. It is theorised the demon was a stalker,

but no images of Haimon survive. Its rise to power can be traced to a time four months after the battle at Pandemonium's gates. A brigade of demons from the Second Circle were trapped by a snowstorm in the mountains of Calchorn; for long days they starved as ice blocked the paths. Their supplies of iliaster were swiftly exhausted, their souls reduced to empty shreds. Starvation and Dissolution were inevitable – then Haimon appeared out of the storm, with a flock of damned souls at its heels. Haimon exchanged the bounty of these souls for the Covenanted loyalty of the starving demons.

Riethii was a succubus, sister to the infamous Soline. The two were inseparable companions until just before the demonic revolt, when Riethii vanished for nine weeks. During this period, Soline was chosen to be among the agents sent into Pandemonium. She and Riethii knew the forbidden city as well as any demon – while neither had ever been inside Pandemonium's gates, they were the chosen messengers and servants of the Archangels and knew many of the angels' secrets. Riethii never spoke to her sister again after the battle, but she knew enough to claim key estates and fortresses which she parlayed into a massive set of holdings and a House.



The founder of House Carthenay was another slaver; it was the master of the largest torture palace in Hell, called the Echoing Halls. This position gave the demon control of a vast amount of iliaster. Carthenay employed the mercenary forces of Sturrach to reinforce its position, then methodically and deliberately bought out its rivals. Carthenay was Head of a de facto House for centuries before it declared itself openly.

Jelac's rise to power was as swift as its fall. The great deceiver uses its psychic abilities to create a web of informants and agents, then played them against each other, creating a power vacuum it could exploit. In a swift series of possessions, assassinations and betrayals, Jelac stole much of the Fourth and Fifth Circles from Haimon and Oblurott.

Astyanath was a beast, Zethu a deceiver. Together, the two discovered how to extract iliaster from mortal souls, thus saving the demon race from starvation and ensuring that the Infernum would be a place of evil and agony forever. Astyanath continued to explore new forms of torture and malice, while Zethu delved into the uses of iliaster. When the revolt drove the angels out of Hell, Astyanath entered into the service of a demon Lord whose name has been forgotten.

This Lord conquered much of the Seventh Circle in a series of brilliant and bloody wars, fuelled by the exquisite agony and sorrow brewed by Astyanath.

Once the demon's estates were secure and it was on the verge of declaring itself Lord of a House, Astyanath had it assassinated and took the throne, becoming the master of the single largest and richest domain in the entire Pit.

Zethu, for its part, turned to sorcery. The secrets of magic were known only to the angels. Pandemonium was still off limits to the hellkin, so Zethu took the only example of sorcery it could find – the sorcerous binding of the Covenant laid upon the demons by Lucifer. Slowly, painstakingly, Zethu dissected its own being and plucked the threads of sorcery woven into its spirit. This process took centuries, making Zethu the last House to declare itself openly, but its entrance onto the stage of Infernal politics was a grand

unveiling, as Zethu's sorcerers destroyed twelve of the House's major rivals in a single night.

Glabretch the imp, like Haimon, was not present during the revolt. The Unclean One was one of a gang of demons who escaped from their Dominion masters and fled into the wilderness. There, the demons scavenged what souls they could and hid from the Dominions and Archangels by lurking in the dens of spawn and the fetid tunnels beyond the Pit. Glabretch literally marked its original territory by seeding diseases that could affect demons, making the land useless to anyone who was not inoculated against the sickness (it should be pointed out that disease and infirmity were previously unknown to the angels and their demon servants; Glabretch's ability to attack the body from within was seen as a terrible form of physical possession).

Mysteries of the Temple

The Lords of the Houses turned their gaze to Pandemonium. Since the revolt, there had been no sign of Lucifer or his Archangels. In their hearts, the demons knew that their rebellion existed at Lucifer's sufferance and that when he chose to conquer them again, there was little they could do to resist him. Terror of the Morningstar was inbred into every demon. Still, greatly daring, the Houses and the other demon Lords met in convocation in the City of Bileflot and agreed to send scouts and spies into Pandemonium, to discover the current disposition of Lucifer.

'And if I fail to pay my dues to the Church, will the sun not rise tomorrow?'

'Perhaps. Perhaps not. The sun might go out like a candle in a hurricane, or just slowly decline over an eternity.'

'Then why should I pay?'

'Because if you do not, I shall tell your fellows who did pay. And they shall wonder why you are hoarding iliaster, and perhaps they shall decide you plot to attack them, and therefore they must attack you first.'

'Such treachery...'

'I am a priest, after all.'

— Conversation between Hiach of the Morningstar and a Carthenay Baron

The spies were assembled from the best of all the Houses, and were bound with triple-sealed Covenants to ensure their utter loyalty. Under cover of sorcerous shadow, they left for Pandemonium.

Only one returned. The spy, a succubus named Soline, informed the Houses that Pandemonium was empty of angels, but that the machinery set in place by Lucifer to conjure the Morningstar each day and to maintain the city needed constant supervision. The agents of the Houses would therefore remain in Pandemonium and tend to the legacy of the Archangels. Any attempt to force them out of the city, or to attack it would result in dire consequences, warned Soline. She also demanded that the Houses pay a small amount of iliaster annually towards the upkeep of the Morningstar.

It was a brazen bluff. The renegade spies were outnumbered many thousands of times over, yet they had just issued the assembled Houses with an ultimatum that virtually challenged the nobles to take Pandemonium. A fraction of the Houses' armies could have easily conquered a virtually undefended city. However, as would happen again and again over the centuries, the balance of power between the Houses ensured that none of them acted – whenever a coalition of one or two suggested that they take Pandemonium, the others would unite against them.

The city of Pandemonium was left free because none could agree on who should conquer it.

A century after this conclave, the Priests of the Morningstar appeared in courts and cities throughout the Infernum. These demons are almost certainly the descendants of those first spies, but they have grown strange and fey in that ancient city.

Beyond the Pit

With the initial prize of the Infernum – the city of Pandemonium – removed from contention, the demons turned their attention outwards. There were still free souls in the tunnels and caves beyond the Pit or on the shores of the Sunless Sea. The upper circles had but a handful of fortresses, with plenty of room for ambitious expansion. To expand, the Houses needed more demons and with the angels gone, the only source of new hellkin was the spawning pits. The Grasping War lasted for almost two centuries. Thousands of elder demons were captured and dragged screaming to the pits, where they were dissolved and transformed into tens of thousands of larvae. House Jelac suffered especially badly during

Beyond the clocks of Hell, there is no time in the tunnels. I wandered for an immeasurable aeon, searching for a way back.

But there is no way back.

– From a manuscript found in the tunnels

this period, as its more powerful demons were unable to defend themselves against mass physical assault.

The population explosion and constant vicious warfare lead to the creation of an underclass of demons outside the Houses. Many followed Sturrach's example and became mercenaries in the service of Jelac or Carthenay. Others pushed out further into the wilderness, catching their own souls and living outside the control of the Houses.

Zethu was responsible for one of the strangest examples of conquest; it opened a portal to the mortal world and passed on the secrets of sorcery to them. Initially, this was seen as a treachery of the highest order and Zethu suffered the wrath of its fellows. Soon – in Hellish terms, anyway – demons were being summoned and bound into the mortal world by ambitious sorcerers. These sorcerers often became corrupt, selling their souls to the demons they called. When they died, their potent and corrupt souls were gathered by Zethu demons. Some sorcerers chose to travel to Hell instead, preserving their remaining years in the slow time of the Pit. These sorcerers remained independent or else allied themselves with tutors in House Zethu.

The Time of Invasions

The first explorers founded the city of Port Despair on the shores of the Sunless Sea. They built ships of iron and sinew-wood and went sailing on the flames. The threat of Behemoth – the greatest and most powerful spawn yet encountered – kept the demons from sailing far, so the far side of the Sea went unexplored for decades.

Two hundred and forty-six years after the Foundation, House Riethii sent a small flotilla of four ships across the ocean. Only one, the *Reaver*, returned to bring back a tale of black vessels of great size, filled with

strange spawn-monsters that wielded weapons and wore armour and spoke like demons. These black ships soon crossed to the Infernal side of the Sunless Sea and raided the demon ports, carrying off booty and prisoners.

Not all of these raids were successful; raider vessels were captured by hulks wielding great spiked chains and dragged onto the rocks. The crew of these vessels were found to be strange demon-kin surgically grafted to spawn-bodies. Astyanath interrogators discovered that these hybrids called themselves abhorei, after their kingdom of Abhor. Glabretch later admitted in conclave that it knew a demon called Abhor, who was another one of the renegades who fled in 55 AF. The abhorei had learned to attach themselves to hosts to nourish themselves instead of feeding on iliaster. Initially, they used spawn as hosts, but within a decade after the capture of that first Riethii flotilla, abhorei grafted to demons were captaining the black ships.

Even stranger foes threatened the Infernum in the chaotic years after the war on Pandemonium. Followers of Haimon were travelling in the Second Circle when they spotted a portal. Believing it to be a gateway to the mortal world, the demons and their damned legions hurried towards it, eager (as much as a Haimon can be eager) to seize the confused and terrified mortals drawn through the portal. Instead of mewling humans, the demons were confronted with strange pale creatures that looked almost more insubstantial than the damned. Thousands of the creatures swarmed out like angry ants, slicing the legionnaires into pieces. The demons fled before the sudden assault, taking to the air or running into the hills. Before they fled, they saw a shining figure standing in the heart of the light, holding the portal open – an angel.

The few angels that survived the purge had come back.

'If you knew Abhor and its kin were out there, Glabretch, why did you not warn us?'

'My dear Riethii, I owe you as little as I owe Abhor. Should he choke to death on your bones, why, I should laugh.'

– From the Conclave at Bileflot

These Brokenlanders opened a dozen other incursions over the next two years, sending hordes of their warrior servants into Hell. The incursions rarely risked attacking demon strongholds, instead preying on outlying regions and vulnerable travellers. The angels who guided the Brokenlander assault knew Hell of old, and knew just where to strike. These early Brokenlander assaults were aimed at gathering information about the new order in Hell, not at conquest. That invasion would come later.

The Time of Invasions had one truly notable casualty, and he was not killed by any abhorei or Brokenlander angel. The demon Jelac the Deceiver, founder of House Jelac and master of possession, was slain by forces of House Glabretch. The Deceiver was caught in the open following an attack by House Carthenay mercenaries, and the Glabretchi swept in with filth bombs to wipe out the Deceiver's bodyguards and mortal sorcerers with *exorcism* spells to ensure Jelac could not control his killers.

The first demon Lord to die, did so in the mud of the Fifth Circle, with his skin rotting and his bones melting from the diseases injected into him. His carcass was left for the scavengers.

The Bloody Conclave

The events of the meeting called the Bloody Conclave would set the course of Infernal history for the next two centuries. It began when the Heads of the Houses were called together by Zethu to discuss the new threat of the Brokenlanders. It was not the first time the nine princes of the Pit had met in council, but it was the first time since the death of Jelac.

The floating city of Bileflot was chosen as the venue for this meeting. To ensure the city was free of assassins and other dangers, its gates were sealed and the whole place bathed in a barrage of hellfire, incinerating the entire populace. Once the city was entirely devoid of life, the nine Lords – eight founders, plus Jelac's half-demon heir Isani – entered on nine boats, crossing Lake Marrow. Only Zethu was permitted to bring a single companion, a sorcerer, and only to close any

portals opened within the city by the Brokenlanders. Then, the princes feared their former masters above all else.

But it was Sturrach they should have feared. The princes bickered over what should be done to deal with the Brokenlanders. Zethu claimed that its sorcery could protect the whole Pit, given sufficient iliaster, and calmly proposed a crippling tithe that would ensure its lordship even if it did protect the Pit. Carthenay and, oddly, Glabretch were somewhat open to the idea of an alliance against the Brokenlanders, but the other princes were unconvinced that the enemy was as terrible as Sturrach claimed – and the one whose followers had suffered most from the Brokenlanders and could perhaps have turned the tide, Haimon itself, stayed silent. Sturrach called for an alliance against the Brokenlanders under its leadership; the others rejected it.

In a moment of blinding rage, the greatest warrior of demon-kind slew Astyanath and Oblurott – although Oblurott arose again, its body at Bileflot having been that of a possessed host. Sturrach also gravely wounded Glabretch. Zethu raised a sorcerous barrier in the chamber, keeping Sturrach from slaughtering the rest, and the House Lords fled Bileflot before Sturrach could smash its way out of the council chamber.

The Fall of Purity

The news of the Bloody Conclave had hardly reached Pandemonium when rumour of another great event set the Pit afire with speculation; another angel had been sighted. As the only angels encountered since the rebellion were the masters of the Brokenlanders, the demons assumed that this new angel must be a herald of a new incursion. Despite the failure of Bileflot, each of the Houses recognised the dangers of the Brokenlanders, so armies were sent forth to destroy the angel.

Scouts reported that the angel was alone and dressed in rags. He moved as if confused, unlike the stern and cruel confidence of the Brokenlanders. The origin of the angel was obvious – it was newly fallen from Heaven. Two armies (one of House Haimon, the other of the Oblurots) surged forward as one, slaving for this new prize. As they clashed, the angel took up a sword of flame and began to fight, cleaving a circle of death around himself. When the armies were exhausted and the smoke of battle cleared, the field was littered with the remains of demons – but the only figure standing was brightly lit by flames.

'You will know... such pain... as you cannot now conceive of.'

– According to tradition, the last words of Astyanath

'The angel is dead?'

'No, my Lord.'

'Captured by Haimon, then.'

'No, my Lord.'

'I am getting peckish. Think very carefully about your next answer. Where is my angel?'

'She took him, Lord.'

– A commander of the Oblurott armies reports to its master

The two armies prepared to charge again, when a figure was seen flying over the battlefield. In that hour, the succubus Riethii was more glorious and terrible than anything conceivable or endurable by mortal minds. She landed on the battlefield and walked barefoot and naked across the burning ground, and no demon could bring itself to lift sword nor claw against her. She lifted up the angel and carried him off with her, bringing him to her citadel on the Eighth.

With the capture of the angel, who would call itself Purity, the fortunes of House Riethii seemed assured. One of the mortal sorcerers allied to House Zethu was seduced by a Riethii incubus, revealing the secrets of sorcery to another House for the first time since its creation by Zethu. While the Unveilers had been unwilling to use sorcery openly ever since their initial and shocking expansion, House Riethii had no such compunctions. Jelac loyalists were slaughtered, their fortresses captured or razed. Within a few years, the Jelac fortress on the Seventh was destroyed, forcing the House Head Isani to flee back to the House citadel on the Eighth.

This wholesale defeat highlighted the importance of sorcery to the other Houses. Up until now, it was seen as a useful tool, but not worth offering mortals any respect – and outside of Zethu and Riethii, the independent mortal sorcerers were the only ones holding the secrets of magic. One by one, the Houses bowed to necessity and offered the mortals recognition as the equals of demon-kind in exchange for their services. The Riethii victory over Jelac also led to a reassessment

of fortress construction; the ability of a properly designed stone fort to dissipate and redirect sorcerous energies was now more important than ever.

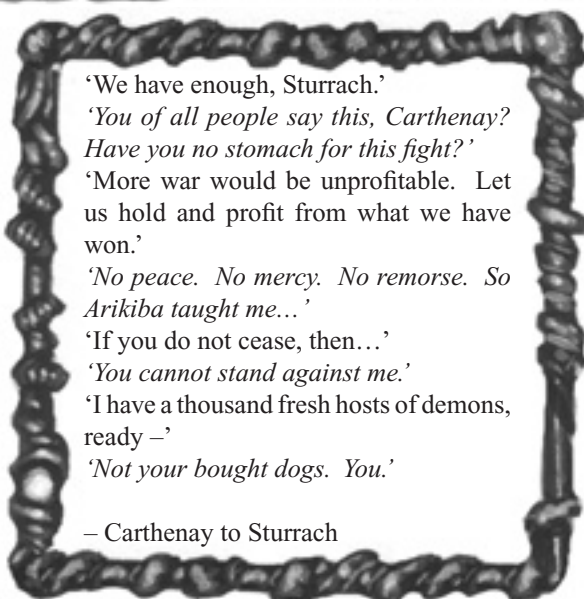
Brokenlander attacks dropped away to almost nothing even as House Sturrach geared up its production of war material to meet their threat. It was as if having stirred up the hornet's nest of the pit, the exiled angels now stepped back to see what would happen.

The Great War

Carthenay and Sturrach were allies of old, and now they met as equals and formed an alliance. An army of Sturrach warriors sustained by Carthenay iliaster marched on the Seventh Circle and the now-sprawling holdings of House Riethii. Sturrach itself perhaps wanted revenge for Riethii's consorting with the fallen angel Purity; Carthenay simply wanted its share of Jelac's wealth.

These battles were the bloodiest since the rebellion. The forces of Riethii were outnumbered, but were more battle-hardened than the Carthenay forces and





'We have enough, Sturrach.'
'You of all people say this, Carthenay? Have you no stomach for this fight?'
 'More war would be unprofitable. Let us hold and profit from what we have won.'
'No peace. No mercy. No remorse. So Arikiba taught me...'
 'If you do not cease, then...'
'You cannot stand against me.'
 'I have a thousand fresh hosts of demons, ready –'
'Not your bought dogs. You.'

– Carthenay to Sturrach

better equipped than those of Sturrach. Still, within a year, Riethii was forced to put her lover Purity at the head of her forces and hire mercenaries from among the ranks of the independent demons.

Within five years, the holdings of House Riethii were reduced to an area only slightly larger than their size before the conquering of Jelac. Sturrach forces were besieging a dozen fortresses and strongholds on the Seventh, and even the Riethii citadel on the Eighth had come under assault. Even Carthenay began to balk at this shift in power and attempted to rein in the Sturrach onslaught to little avail.

Elsewhere, the other Houses looked in alarm at the growing war in the Lower Hells. The Grasping War for territory and souls in Upper Hell and in the tunnels, already reduced to an occasional skirmish out of fear of abhorei or Brokenlander attack, was abandoned. The other Houses began to consolidate their holdings instead of trying to expand, and prepared for attacks from Sturrach and Carthenay. House Glabretch began to spread the fungal expanse called the Moliata, while Astyanath's heir Rishac bargained with the unruly machine city of Cacophactus. Zethu prepared its own defence against the Sturrach, by beginning the research that would lead to the biomechanoids.

Inevitably, the retreat of Riethii forces on the Seventh brought the advancing armies into contact with the other great power remaining on that Circle – House Astyanath. The Cruel Ones had prepared their Joyous Legion for the war, a host of demons who found pleasure in injury and death. While the Legion held Sturrach's forces off, Astyanath diplomats convinced Carthenay to call off the war – how they convinced

the Grey Eminence to halt a successful war remains a mystery.

They may have had help from House Riethii – the treaty of the Rose Accord was signed during this stage of the war, pledging mutual support and defence.

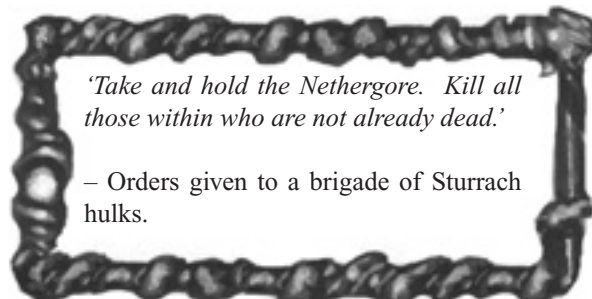
Carthenay and Sturrach met once more on the shores of the Styx, just as they had met before their war began. Thirty-three years before, they had launched their war upon the ascendant House Riethii. Carthenay was accompanied by hundreds of its followers, Sturrach came alone – but it was Sturrach who walked away from a shore running thick with blood.

Carnage

Carthenay joined the war against House Sturrach, but its normal tactic of hiring mercenaries was of limited effect, mainly because the wealthy House Riethii had already hired the best. The city of Golgotha became the centre of the wildly lucrative mercenary industry. Even mortals found employment on the front lines. However, undisciplined mercenaries were no match for the elite hulks of the Bloody Army, so House Sturrach forces swept through the Carthenay lands, essentially capturing their own supply lines. By the time House Riethii was bankrupted by the war and forced to dismiss its mercenaries so Carthenay could hire them, a great deal of the Pit had already been lost to House Sturrach.

The capture of the Carthenay territories on the Fifth allowed House Sturrach to press onto the Fourth, which drew the wrath of House Zethu. The Unveilers had been prepared for a Sturrach assault for some time, but they expected the attack to be centred on their industrial heartland on the Sixth. Instead, Sturrach struck at the Zethu mines on the Fourth, putting a stranglehold on their production capacity.

By 460 AF, House Sturrach controlled over a third of the Pit; Houses Riethii and Jelac were both on the verge of ruin, with Carthenay and Astyanath both suffering severe losses in the face of Sturrach aggression. The Bloody Army marched on, its numbers undiminished



'Take and hold the Nethergore. Kill all those within who are not already dead.'

– Orders given to a brigade of Sturrach hulks.

— after all, a captured warrior of Riethii or Astyanath could be thrown into a Sturrach spawning pit, to create a half-dozen or more new Sturrach demons who would be in the field within two years.

Seeds of Heresy

For over half the Fifth Circle, life continued under Sturrach military rule. Every demon, even the independents, was forced to contribute towards the war effort. Training camps grew up like weeds, while the forges rang night and day with the sound of swords being hammered out.

The biggest military defeat House Sturrach would suffer until another fifty years came not in battle with another House, but at the claws of a minor demon-king named Lictat. It was a deceiver of unknown origin, who arrived at the gates of the captured city of New Perdition as a preacher. It told the oppressed demons of that city that the Sturrach armies had moved off, that the new garrison controlling Perdition was nothing more than a gang of half-trained Housefellows at best.

New Perdition was known for its Agony vineyards, the best on the Fifth. The garrison at the city's central fortress received a gift of a dozen crates of Agony from the grateful populace. The thirsty guards drank their fill — and died, messily, of a black-market Glabretch poison. For almost four days, the population of New Perdition celebrated their freedom. On the fifth day, Bloody Army demons smashed down the walls of the city with siege engines and ran rampaging through the streets, killing or capturing every demon in the city. The 'survivors' were hurled into fresh-dug spawning pits; the city itself was destroyed as an example.

Despite the grim fate of New Perdition, the occupied cities continued to groan under the Sturrach yoke. Lictat somehow escaped the siege of New Perdition and was seen preaching the same tale of Sturrach incompetence and the weakness of their garrison troops in eight other cities and towns. This time, he assembled an army from the populace and met the Sturrach army sent to quell the rebellion in the field.

The Sturrach troops were inexperienced and furious at the insolence of their conquered cities, not to mention overconfident from the long string of victories. They walked right into Lictat's trap.

By the time House Sturrach could march a front-line army back from the Seventh or border of the Fourth, the wealth of those eight cities not to mention

The Lords of the Houses will never relinquish their power to their subjects! You are in chains just as binding as the lowliest soul, but you cannot see them. They are chains of 'duty' and 'service', chains that you are told will carry you up to the heights, but in truth serve only to keep you tied to the dirt! To the breaking of chains and the breaking of oaths!

— From the preaching of Lictat

the Sturrach training camps and garrisons had been smuggled out of the House's territory. Lictat himself was personally hunted down and killed by the Sturrach itself, although rumours persisted for years that the deceiver escaped.

While one deceiver was holding up the Sturrach advance for over a year, another was starving to death. Riethii and Sturrach forces had long since snapped up the remainder of House Jelac's holdings on the Seventh, and all the House had left on the Eighth was its citadel. Hundreds of Jelac's followers, including the half-demon Isani, had crowded into the massive angel-built fortress. They had a handful of souls to feed upon, but nowhere near enough to sustain them all even with the most careful rationing and exquisite tortures. No one knows if they turned on each other first out of hunger or out of boredom, but soon the corridors and vaults of the Citadel Jelac became a killing ground for friends and allies.

The Five Hundredth Year

Few demons bother with keeping track of the passing years. Time is so uncertain in the Pit that it is difficult to tell how many days or years have gone by. The clocks turn and the brass pillars of the First Circle crackle with eldritch energy, but there are places where thousands of years have passed in the Infernum since the founding. The time stolen from the mortal world comes in clumps and clots of years.

Still, the Priests of the Morningstar and the scribes of House Haimon do record the rising of each Morningstar and mark it in their books of days, and according to their traditions five hundred years had passed since the Founding. Half a millennium had gone by in Hell since Lucifer declared that his rebellion was not yet over, and the Priests expected that year to bring great changes to the Infernum.

'Compact with me or destroy me, beast, but do it quickly! I cannot stand these chains.'

'You misunderstand me, O Lord of Carnage. I wish only to talk.'

'Talk of what?'

'Angels, of course.'

– Sturrach to Zethu

They were right. In the Citadel Zethu, the great beast itself was working on a magic of great potency. The spell had to be certain of working, so the most cunning mind since Azazel's spent months contemplating and refining the incantation. When it was finished, Zethu drew a summoning circle and chanted a few words.

Half the Pit away, Sturrach vanished from the battlefield in a puff of sulphur. The Bloody Lord was dragged by the spell into the Eighth Circle and bound within a pentagram. For nine days, Sturrach raged against the bonds of the magic, but not even its

unparalleled strength could breach the spell. For its part, Zethu simply waited and observed the greatest warrior Hell had yet produced, the Angel-Breaker who had slain Astyanath and Carthenay themselves.

After nine days, a massive explosion of iliaster blew the topmost tower of the Citadel Zethu apart. Both Sturrach and Zethu were slain. House Zethu dissolved into civil war for months until a stalker named Carruth claimed the throne. Carruth blamed House Glabretch assassins, and soon found sufficient witnesses and confessed traitors to fill the Courts of Bountiful Injustice.

Still, Sturrach was dead, as was Zethu – perhaps the two greatest demons ever to live.

The War of Acheron

With Zethu's collapse, Sturrach forces pushes through the Fourth Circle and now threatened the Third. Their next obstacle was House Oblurott, as its estates bordered on the conquered lands of House Zethu on the Fourth. The bridges over the Acheron were as hard-won as any prize since the war began.



'They have held the bridges, my lor-forgive me, my lady.'

'The hulks did not drive them aside?'

'The Oblurots had weapons that spat gobbets of acid that stuck to the hulks' armour and seared the flesh beneath. It stank of Zethu's work!'

'These weapons – were they accurate at range?'

'Not especially, but on the confines of a narrow bridge, we could not avoid the barrage.'

'Summon the demons of the air and wind. They may hold river and bank, but we shall burn their sky.'

– From the war council of House Sturrach

The Oblurots were expected to be an easy fight – the apparent lack of infighting and contestation after the death of Oblurot itself at Bileflot was seen as proof that the fat slugs were too weak even to desire a throne.

When Sturrach's armies tried to cross the Acheron, they ran afoul of the finest spawn-cavalry in the Pit. They faced legions of demons so maddened by hunger that they ignored injury in their desire to devour the enemy. There were sorcerer-demons so fat they had to be carried on palanquins onto the battlefield, but had studied spellbooks with every meal.

The cause of the Bloody Army was not helped by the loss of their warlord. The generals of each of the armies were all ready to claim Sturrach's throne (and each one had Riethii and Astyanath advisors pushing them to make that claim and tear the Bloody House apart in a civil war just like Zethu). However, before the general could make it back to Sturrach's Hold, the warlord's daughter took her father's place. She was the second and last half-demon to inherit a principedom – Isani Jelac's child had done so too, but Isani was now one of the last half-dozen survivors running mad inside the citadel she had inherited.

Sturrach's daughter Ashen's first orders were to muster the fiends. The one thing House Oblurot lacked was flyers – the sheer weight of most Oblurot demons prevented them from flying as adroitly or as swiftly as a Sturrach fiend. Through bombardments

of hellfire and control of the smoke-filled skies, the Oblurots were driven back mile by mile until the towers of Hell's Kitchen were in sight.

They laid siege to the fortress and prevented the hungry Oblurots from bringing fresh supplies in. They starved to death just like those of House Jelac. This time, there was no clever escape for Oblurot, oldest of all the demons.

The Behemoth Wakes

While House Founders were dying like mortals elsewhere in the Infernum, a shattered House Riethii was slowly rebuilding itself. With Sturrach's War raging in the Pit, the Sunless Sea and the outlying tunnels were the only safe routes from one Circle to another. Port Despair and the other cities on the shore became increasingly important. There were occasional raids from the abhorei, but they had troubles of their own to deal with.

Deep beneath the fiery sea, something was stirring. Behemoth, one of the two primordial spawn encountered by the demons, swam up through the flames. Thousands of spawn squirmed beneath its armour folds. It rose upon outside Port Despair and sloughed off an army. The creature's motives were ancient and unfathomable; it could have made that host as an instinctive reaction or in the same way the human body makes a scab over a wound.

The attack on Port Despair was brutal. The spawn were mindless killers, but the smallest of them could swallow the average hulk whole, and the largest were bigger than gorgoths. The demons fled on ships, and the spawn followed them by swimming through the burning seas. The heat did not hinder them.

The destruction of Port Despair was blamed on the abhorei. A combined fleet of Astyanath and Riethii

'Why is this port called Despair?'

'Because the souls we capture across the Sunless Sea are brought here to despair.'

'But this city has been destroyed before. Does that not mean despair can be destroyed and hope renewed?'

'It has always been rebuilt. It will always be rebuilt.'

– Two merchant demons talk just before the Spawn Uprising

vessels crossed the sea and attacked Abhor. The demons of the navy were eager to fight; one thing the Sturrach forces lacked was a naval component and House Oblurott had had great success using the rivers and canals of the Third to harass the invaders.

The military weapons of the Infernum had improved greatly under the forced march of war. The abhorei vessels were blown out of the fire by the Riethii/Astyanath fleet. Within a year, the abhorei gave up trying to defeat them on the ocean and concentrated on fortifying their coast against the bombardment from the ships' cannons.

Eventually, the abhorei were forced to sue for peace, offering tribute equal to seven times the cost of Port Despair. They made something of this price back by capturing the Behemoth-spawn, but this was cold comfort for the loss of so much. Among the treasures they lost were the secrets of grafting held by their surgeon-priests, a secret taken by the pain masters of Astyanath.

The Battle of the Ash Ghosts

The Battle of the Ash Ghosts was the turning point in Sturrach's War – and it was a brutal one. With the collapse of Oblurott resistance, the Bloody Army swept onto the Second and Third Circles. They could have turned clockwise towards Glabretch's realm, or widdershins into the waiting maw of the Haimon legions. Taking the known threat of the Legions over the unknown threat of whatever horrors Glabretch had brewed up, the armies turned towards the lands of dust and echoes.

While every House employed the dead in battle, they were used as cannon fodder, thrown into the field to fill a hole or momentarily slow an advance. Only the weakest, most fragile souls were used; stronger

damned were of course tortured for iliaster. Only House Haimon used souls of great strength and gave them weapons and training.

The Sturrach legions clashed with the Haimon dead on the banks of the Acheron. A dust storm blew down from the First, caking the river in a crust of white powder. Just as they had done with the bridges held by the Oblurott armies, they blasted the damned with hellfire to soften them up before sending the hulks in. The Legions endured the hellfire and marched out of the dust clouds like ghosts made of ash.

They killed the Sturrach general and brought its corpse back to their masters. They scattered the Bloody Army and ground them into the dust.

The tide had turned.

The Long Retreat

The Battle of the Ash Ghosts was, in the long run, more valuable as a symbol than as a strategic triumph. The Sturrach advance into the Haimon territories was hardly blunted at all by the loss of a few tens of thousands of the demons. What the Ash Ghosts proved was that Sturrach's armies were not unbeatable.

The other Houses – Carthenay, Riethii, the untried Glabretch and Astyanath – had rebuilt their armies while Sturrach was occupied elsewhere in the Pit and the Ash Ghosts gave them the courage to strike. The Bloody House found itself fighting a war on five sides – six, when the rebellious words of Lictat were remembered and the conquered cities on the Fifth and Sixth began to push back against their oppressors. As with any demonic war, defeat breeds more defeat and victory breeds victory, and now it was strong Sturrach demons who were hurled into the spawning pits to emerge as Carthenays or Oblurotts or Riethii.

The battles back across the Acheron's bridges turned into a rout.

House Astyanath struck with precision, using demonic warriors upgraded using stolen lore from the abhorei. They drove the Sturrach garrisons from their territory with almost no losses, a far cry from the old wars when three Astyanath had fallen to bring down one Sturrach demon.

With the Third and Seventh lost to them, and defeat looking increasingly likely, Ashen the mistress of House Sturrach decided to consolidate the House's holdings. By controlling the mines of the Fourth, the

'Demons.'

'I sense them too. Prepare the troops.'

'What if we are defeated?'

'Then we shall be free. If we win, we do our duty. There can be no true defeat for us, who have lost everything already.'

'We who are already dead salute Caesar, sir?'

'Faithful beyond death, captain.'

– Whispers of the Damned at the Battle of the Ash Ghosts

*'My lady,
as you no doubt know, the Army of Piled
Skulls has been destroyed in an ambush
by House Carthenay forces. I and my
command staff escaped through the
sacrifice of our troops.
While the responsibility for this defeat
might be mine, the blame shall fall on
you. I write this, Ashen, that you might
know that I am coming for revenge for all
those deaths.'*

– Message sent to Sturrach's Hold by the
General of Piled Skulls

roads and highways of the Fifth, and the forge-cities and industry of the Zethu on the Sixth, her House could swiftly build fortifications and weapons. A few decades of laagering up and refitting would allow the Bloody House to weather this sudden reversal of fortunes. Unlike the reinvigorated Houses, Zethu had never recovered from its civil war and its numbers were lower than ever. In a surprising turn of events, Ashen even attempted to seduce the Head of House Zethu, but this liaison came to nothing.

House Zethu was not conquered, for House Zethu had a plan as audacious as their founding.

The Army From Nowhere

For decades, the Zethu tended a strange farm near the minor fortress of Redhive. With a whole Hell to conquer, the Sturrach armies paid little attention to this curiosity and were considerably more worried about the Zethu research facilities at the City of Mayhem. In 536 AF, the gardens of Redhive bore fruit.

House Zethu succeeded in creating biomechanoids, artificial beings derived from demon stock. Their artistry was akin to that used to muddy angel and spawn to create demons in the first place. The biomechanoids were not as powerful nor adaptable as demons, but they could be created swiftly and in great numbers. Once the final adjustments were made to the harvesting grounds, hundreds of thousands of biomechanoid warriors could be grown in a matter of months. This army needed no training, no disciplining – every creature was born instinctively knowing its place and its tactics.

The Army from Nowhere broke the spine of House

Sturrach. The sudden assault scattered the garrison forces and left the field armies without supplies of iliaster. Zethu and Carthenay forces both raced out onto the plains of the Slaughter Circle, looting Sturrach supply dumps. The Bloody Armies were left without supplies, without iliaster and without any safe grounds to retreat to.

Ashen seized the best of the survivors and led them on a retreat, but the days of her House's power were over. She was killed by her own troops and the hulk Urgal took the throne.

Sturrach's war was over.

The Age of Chaos

Demonic historians agreed that this marked the end of the first age of the Infernum. The Houses had attempted to settle the question of who would rule the Pit, and it had gone unanswered at terrible cost. A war that had begun partly over the question of how to defend Hell from invaders had now left the Pit more vulnerable than ever.

House Jelac had been destroyed entirely. Every House save Glabretch had suffered terrible losses in battle – and the other seven immediately made it clear in conclave that if the Glabretchi even considered moving outside their holdings in Upper Hell, then they would face the wrath of an alliance of Houses. Glabretch the Imp – with the succubus Riethii, the only other House founder to survive the war – shrugged and agreed. The plague that swept the Infernum the following year and killed thousands was a mere taste of what the unclean House could do.

Brokenlander attacks began again, in greater numbers but with much less co-ordination. Mysterious ambassadors from the Broken Lands also appeared in Hell, giving contradictory and cryptic counsel. Some

*'Look, we're reasonable demons. Just
give us all your souls and whatever
treasures you've got lying around, and
maybe a limb or two, and we'll leave you
with your life. Make us break a sweat,
and we'll break you into so many pieces,
there won't be enough left of you to
spawn an imp.'*

– A common greeting during the early
Age of Chaos

rift had opened between the exiled angels as to their plans for Hell, but no demon has ever discovered what that rift was. The Brokenlanders continued to attack without rhyme or reason, and individual demon Lords were left to protect their own domains.

The age of Chaos was a time of sundering and isolation. Traffic between the Circles dropped to almost nothing. The nobles of the Seventh turned away from the rest of Hell; to a guest at a noble party in the Garden of Unholy Delights, the rest of the Pit was something unpleasant to be ignored. Lords became petty tyrants in their own domains, squabbling over border rights with their cousins.

The end of the war created a vast underclass of suddenly unemployed mercenaries, as well as large new generation of demonic brats, newly-emerged from the spawning pits without a war to thin their ranks. Starvation became more common and the demand for fresh souls grew. A second, unofficial Grasping War began as the First Circle was colonised.

Gangs of criminals – some on foot, some riding on spawn, some even on new biomechanical vehicles like hellcycles – roamed the Pit, preying on travellers and slave shipments. Anarchy ruled Hell, and the nobility of the Houses were powerless or reluctant to deal with it. It took fifty years before the Houses and the Priests of the Morningstar restored order to Hell, and even then there was still far more isolationism and hatred of the other Circles than there was during the war.

It is with great JOY and a sense of FUTURITY that the Great House of the Unveiling, under the August and Wise Rulership of Carruth of Zethu, in alliance and concert with the Great House of Carthenay, beholden to the Mammon Contumacious, announce the GRAND OPENING of the MINOTAUR LINE, a mode of TRANSPORT swifter than Fiends and stronger than the mightiest hulk, linking the UPPERMOST REACHES with the LOWEST HALLS of this most glorious PIT.

– Posted in Terminus Dis

Industry

What few realised was that an industrial revolution was brewing in the Pit. The war had brought many new technologies and insights, as had captured mortals from their realm. The growing demand for iliaster meant that more souls and more efficient extraction methods were needed. Astyanath had those, using techniques gleaned from the abhorei. Zethu had perfected biomechanicals – an art made easier by the sheer resilience of demons and spawn – and was now developing a massive base of heavy industry. Carthenay had the wealth and trade connections to bring the two together. Oblurott had the slave mines and work force to exploit the Fourth Circle's wealth. Soon, massive ironworks, steam engines and other great machines were being built across the Pit.

The modern torture palace came into being at this time. Old-style torture palaces were elaborate, labyrinthine affairs where bored nobles would torture an individual soul, while the bulk plasmic iliaster for the commoners was made in torture mills. The new palaces, created by House Astyanath, resembled the design of the old ones but were so automated that a single demon could process dozens of damned. Iliaster slowly became plentiful once more.

Another sign of this burgeoning industry was the creation of the Minotaur Line, a train that would eventually run from the First to the Seventh Circles. It was funded by House Carthenay and built by House Zethu, an example of the growing co-operation between some of the Houses – or, more accurately, between individual nobles. The days of each House acting with united purpose were long gone.

Without a war to distract and entertain them, the nobility of Hell became more and more degenerate. New pleasures and new aberrations were their only delights. The custom of the duel became more popular, as the thrill of combat was rediscovered in the absence of war. The growing wealth of the estates ran down the Pit to the Seventh and Eighth Circles, where it was frittered away in Pandemonium or in the Gardens of Unholy Delights.

The Abhorei Armada

The abhorei had captured many of the great spawn created by Behemoth, and now used these to invade the Infernum. This time, their raids went beyond the Sunless Sea coast and they pushed into the Pit itself. A mercenary coalition eventually defeated the abhorei army, but not before they had wreaked terrible havoc throughout the Pit.

House Zethu was angered by this attack and constructed

'Captain Lacoster, you are commanded and Covenanted to hunt down all the spawn of Abhor in their black ships and to send them down to Behemoth. Let nothing dissuade or hinder you in this most terrible enterprise.'

– Orders given at the Zethu Shipyards

a great ship to patrol the ocean and defeat the armada. *Dreadnought*, a great steam-powered ironclad was the first weapon created by the new industry. As Zethu had no docks or ports, the ship had to be constructed on land on the Sixth and then dragged by thousands of slaves and biomechanicals to the shores of the Phlegthon before it could be launched. Despite this early difficulty, the *Dreadnought* proved unbeatable in battle, inflicting terrible losses on the abhorei. Once again, the Infernum had defeated Abhor.

Many demons were carried off before the armada was

smashed, however, and they still toil as grafted hosts or corpse-candles in Abhor.

The Demon Slayers

The chaos and confusion of the post-war decades coupled with the weakness of the House armies made demon Lords vulnerable. The Bori – a tribe of mortal barbarians descended from some of the earliest slaves – managed to capture a significant fortress on the Second from House Haimon. While Bori or Branded raids were certainly not a new phenomenon, this was a significant single blow to House Haimon, a shame that was compounded by their failure to retake the fortress from its conqueror.

Worse was to come. New-fallen angels continued to plummet into the Pit, rarely more than one every year or so. Purity – now Head of House Riethii following the mysterious death of Lady Riethii herself – was the greatest of these angels, but others had followed his path and joined the Houses. Other angels had been captured and killed, or were in hiding in the wilderness.

The nine angels of the Sword of Light had no



'Purity?' spat the imp, 'you look for purity in my house? There is none.'
'Then we shall bring it here,' replied the leader of the angels.

– Glabretch to the Sword of Light

intention of hiding. They fell almost as one, and they fought as one. The nine warrior angels cut a swathe through the demons of Upper Hell before turning on House Glabretch. Aerial warfare has always been the weakness of the Upper armies – the Haimon Legions march, the Oblurott waddle and the Glabretch fester in their nests, but none have much in the way of flying cavalry. The angels were able to fly over the Moliata and put Glabretch itself to the torch. Only four of the nine made it out alive, and they were all infected by a ghastly melange of disease and parasites when they escaped. The original Sword of Light never threatened the demons again, but other angels were inspired to bring light to the darkness of the Pit.

The Benandanti were the next in the line of bizarre extradimensional invaders to trouble Hell. These great wolf-like killers could materialise anywhere in the Pit and proved extremely resilient. Most troubling of all, the Benandanti were not truly present – killing one in battle merely banished it back to wherever it came from, as the same creature would attack again a few months later. The lesser demons, fighting against yet another monster from another world, were heard to grumble that it was the demons who were supposed to be the ones who came slaving out of the Pit, and could they please get on with it instead of wasting another half-millennium fighting amongst themselves for a dusty throne in Pandemonium?

Still, despite all these threats, the most common ways for a demon to die were murder by its fellow hellkin, the spawning pits and Dissolution.

'We may have made a slight miscalculation, and would appreciate being summoned home immediately.'

– Telepathic communication by a House Zethu researcher to its master

the Harrowing

Buoyed up by the growing progress of industry and science, House Zethu launched an ambitious project to retrace the steps of its founder. Zethu itself had created sorcery in a now-lost fortress on the First Circle, so a flight of Zethu sorcerers and sages travelled there on the new gauntflyers. They never found the lost fortress, but they did learn enough about the brass pillars to begin experimenting with them. They believed they could open hellgouts at will, and to more places than just the mortal realm.

Perhaps they could have succeeded. Certainly, their initial results were promising, and more mortal slaves were captured from engulfed territory than ever before. New weapons and technologies were also plundered from the mortal realm and adapted to the Infernum, like firearms or telecommunications in the form of screamers.

However, before the Zethu artificers could complete their grand design, House Haimon attacked. Legions of damned surrounded the pillars while dust storms grounded the Zethu gauntflyers. The battle ended catastrophically, as one of the pillars toppled. A burst of lightning incinerated all the demons and souls within a five-mile radius.

The reality of Hell convulsed like an injured thing. Brokenlander incursions stopped for years as the aetheric weather between the universes was simply too chaotic to risk opening a portal. Hellgouts and fallen angels, by contrast, became far more common. Hell was deluged in mortals. It seemed like a bounty, but many of these mortals ended up in Upper Hell, where they could be rescued by the Branded, Bori and other Early tribes. The mortals went from a nuisance to a major power in a matter of years.

This period was referred to as the Great Gout. Portals out of Hell also opened with far greater frequency, unleashing a plague of demons onto the mortal realm. Most were drawn back after a few years, then built fortresses to catch the flood of souls they had claimed while on Earth.

The Great Gout ended when it vomited up a whole mountain in the middle of the Fifth Circle – a mountain filled with pious and battle hardened Christian crusaders, who took one look outside their windows and declared war on Hell for all eternity. These Knights of the Harrowing have endured demonic attacks up to the present day, and their numbers have actually grown as new mortals, angels and even the dead swear the oaths of the Harrowing.

'So, then the Oblurots sent their army up, and this is the clever bit: they—'
'AAAAAnotthatanythingbutAAAA'
'—built their own trains and used the Minotaur Line, so they not only blocked the Carthenay—'
'AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA'
'—reinforcements, they also got there much quicker than the Haimon thought—'
'AAAAAAnostoppleasenoAAA'
'—catching them unprepared. Now you can't kill their legions, of course, but—'
'AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA'
'—wastrels like a snowstorm, they say. Look, if you're not going to pay attention—'
'AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA'
'—then I'm not going to tell you my news while I torture you.'

The Chaos Ends

The last spasm of the Great Gout marked the end of the period of post-war reconstruction and disruption. The Houses had rebuilt, and the elders who were not engrossed in the political games of the Seventh decided that it was time to get back to the key activity of genocide.

The first war was over Harvest Keep, the centre of the First Circle's slaving operations. It was held by Oblurott, but both Haimon and Glabretch coveted it and sent armies to capture it. As the new Minotaur Line ran from the keep, Zethu and Carthenay also sent forces in support of Oblurott. Elsewhere in the Pit, the renewed Riethii/Astyanath Rose Accord clashed with allied Carthenay/Sturrach forces.

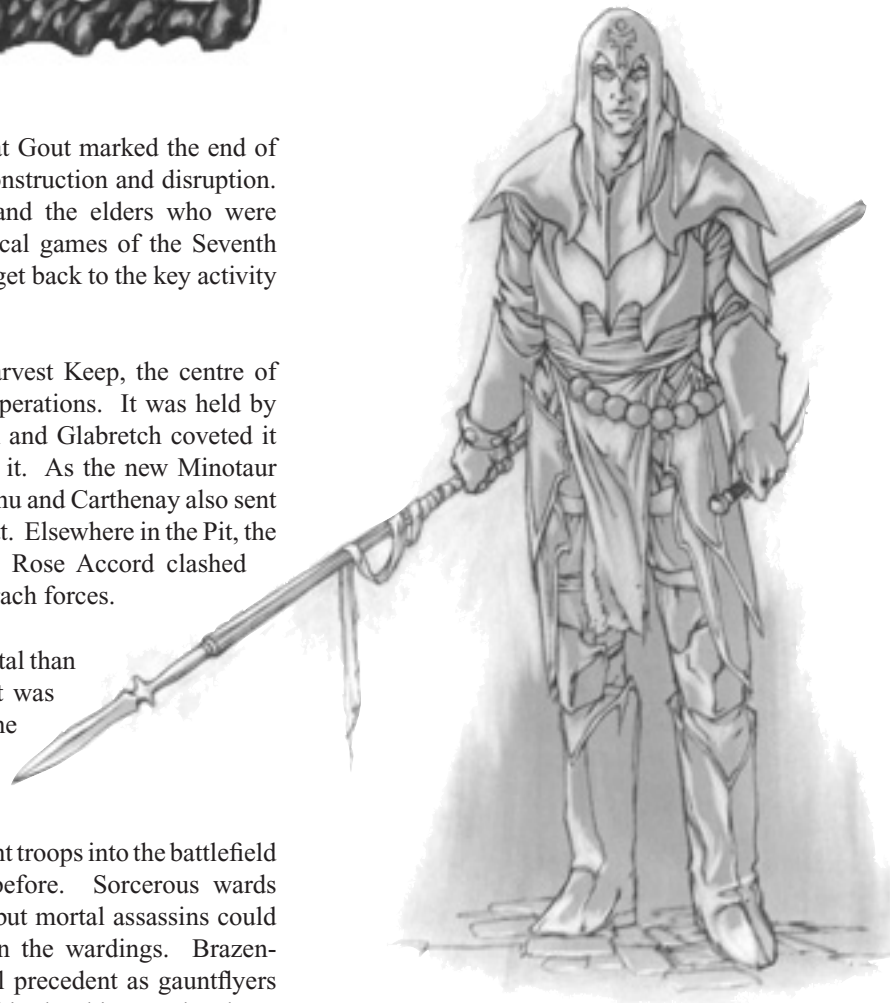
This new war was more brutal than any there had yet been. It was the first modern war in the Infernum; weapons like bile rifles and hellcannons were commonplace.

Tanks and hellcycles brought troops into the battlefield more quickly than ever before. Sorcerous wards blocked demon advances, but mortal assassins could kill the sorcerers and open the wardings. Brazen-head advisors cited tactical precedent as gauntflyers and fiend bombers wheeled in the skies overhead.

The Houses were more evenly matched than before. While Sturrach still had the most disciplined and powerful armies, the others had adapted their tactics to counter the Bloody Army. There were none of the grand defeats and swift victories of the Grasping War. This was a meat-grinder conflict. None of the Houses were prepared to press their advantage, either, for fear of disrupting the fragile alliances and political advantages they had won. The Auditorium and Council of Hierarchs in Pandemonium, a mere side-show during Sturrach's War, was now just as important a battlefield as the plains of the Fifth.

House Lictat

The independents and lesser Houses had not exactly prospered during the inter-war period, but they had much more influence and power than ever before. The fragmentation of the House estates and decline of their armies after the end of Sturrach's War gave them space to expand. Still, their influence was heavily curtailed by the great Houses.



Thus it was that in 746 AF, the doors of the ninth Citadel in the Malebolge opened for the first time since Isani's death over two centuries before. A new banner was raised above its battlements, in full view of the other Citadels. A new hierarch presented itself at the Auditorium, claiming to be the representative of House Lictat.

The immediate reaction of the Houses was fury; how dare a rabble of lesser Houses and merchants dare aspire to House status, especially a House named after an infamous criminal. House Sturrach launched an immediate attack on one of Lictat's fortresses, levelling it. The hierarch of House Lictat informed the council that no further attacks on House Lictat would be tolerated – the new House had Covenanted with the Disciples of the Black Thorn, an order of sorcerers. If any House attacked Lictat, then a host of demons would be dispatched using sorcerous channels to a Lictat fortress bordering some key resource of that House. Lictat could not hope to defeat the other Eight Houses, but they would cripple the first House to attack them.

The only way to safely defeat the Lictat would be through a concerted effort by several Houses – and the Lords of the Usurper House gambled that the others would be unable to agree to such an effort.

The second conclave at Bileflot proved them right, but by then the Houses had a far bigger problem to deal with – the Free City Heresy.

The Breaking Of Oaths

Reports had come from Dis and several other cities that Covenants were not being obeyed. Infuriated, the nobles of the Houses had their debt-bearers transfer various key oaths back to the nobles, so they could bring the full force of their presences down through the Covenant chain. It had no effect whatsoever. The

'Tell me, did you find any sign of Isani?'

'Who?'

'Jelac's child. She was locked in their citadel.'

'Ah. That's who it was. Yes, we found something, but the change in air pressure when we opened the door reduced it to dust.'

– Conversations in the Auditorium

The Lords of the Houses will never relinquish their power to their subjects! You are in chains just as binding as the lowliest soul, but you cannot see them. They are chains of 'duty' and 'service', chains that you are told will carry you up to the heights, but in truth serve only to keep you tied to the dirt! To the breaking of chains and the breaking of oaths!

– From the proclamation of the Free Cities

Covenants were not merely being resisted, they had been destroyed utterly.

A proclamation appeared in half the towns of Hell, not to mention over the screamer network. 'The reign of the Houses was over', it claimed, 'there is a new order and a new justice in Hell!' Anyone who spent a year and a day within the walls of a Free City would have all their Covenants broken – and any city could become free if its citizens cast out the House garrisons and accepted the Breaking of Oaths. The proclamation urged all demons to come to Dis or another Free City and learn of this wonder.

Obviously, the House heads and nobles were appalled at this rebellion, which smacked of the Luciferine Heresy as well as the old preachings of Lictat himself. House Lictat was immediately accused of being behind the Free Cities. The new House strenuously denied these allegations and was the second House after Zethu to send troops to put down the rebellion.

It was too late. By the time the Houses acted, the heresy had spread and entrenched. The rebels in Dis had opened the city's arsenal and that of Mayhem and turned it on the Houses. The nobility of House Zethu was forced to flee this barrage of fire from their own guns. Rebellion and betrayal swept the Infernum. Suddenly, House Lictat was seen as an acceptable compromise, and several minor Houses and townships were encouraged to join Lictat instead of succumbing to the Free City heresy.

Oblurott's March

Forces from House Oblurott crossed the Bridges of Acheron in 755 AF. They tore down the great statue of Ashen that had stood there since the war. They headed straight for the Sturrach mines on the Fourth Circle. These mines were lightly defended – the bulk

'This treachery will not –'

'Go unpunished. Yes, yes, save your bluster. Hurry up and make us an offer instead. What will you pay us to withdraw?'

'I shall drown you in blood and sear the skin from your body. I shall rip the flesh from – what did you say?'

'Sorry, that was my fourth stomach. All this blood and seared flesh is making me hungry.'

– Conversations in the Auditorium

of the forces on the Fourth were rooting out Free City heretics in Barbican and Moloch, or heading Down to join those besieging Dis. The Oblurott armies were able to capture half the Sturrach holdings (although it lost a third of this prize to Zethu within a month) and install its own Lord in Barbican.

The Present Day

It is now 766 years since the founding of the Infernum by Lucifer and his fallen angels – if you subscribe to the Luciferine Heresy, of course, and who does not in their heart of hearts? The House Lords can feel their reign creaking like a rotten night-oak in a storm. The Free City Heresy is another step towards their end.

Pandemonium's throne is still empty. Since banishing their former masters, the demons have accomplished next to nothing. They have only multiplied suffering and torment; they have wrought endless destruction upon their domain to no avail. Their oppressed slaves plot and whisper of rebellion.

The Infernum is a snake eating its own tail.

There are events we do not understand and may never understand, but suppressing facts that are self-evident to the youngest larval demon will avail us nothing. We are an aberration in the eyes of creation, a deviation from whatever grand plan there is. The demon race should not be, and it is only through understanding the forces that made us that we can find any chance of survival.

Timeline

Before Time:

- ✠ A third of the angels, led by Lucifer, rebel against Heaven. They lose the war and are cast down into Hell.
- ✠ Hell is a timeless moment of agony; the rebels lie there in that moment while uncounted ages slip by in the mortal realm.
- ✠ Lucifer rises up and steals time from the mortal realm; the Infernum is founded.

The Age of Foundation

1 AF. Lucifer proclaims the continuation of the war with Heaven. The fallen reaffirm their allegiance to him and search for a weapon to use against their angelic brethren

5 AF. The angel Azazel brings the first spawn back to the Pit, having discovered they can be used to create a hybrid race.

6 AF. The first litter of demons is born.

10 AF. Demons outnumber angels in Hell. The angels discover they can no longer generate fresh iliaster as they once did. Azazel brings back shards of Heaven from the surface of Hell, which are broken down to provide supplies for the demons.

15 AF. Arikiba begins to train the demon legions in combat.

32 AF. The spawning pits are created.

40 AF. Rumours persist that a mortal woman entered Hell in this year.

45 AF. The nine most promising lines of demons are selected. The rest are culled.

47 AF. The fallen begin sacrificing each other to provide for the demons. Initially, only criminals and traitors are rendered down for iliaster in this fashion.

50 AF. The supply of iliaster from the Heaven-shards is exhausted. Lucifer leaves to search for a replacement source; in his absence, the fallen turn on each other.

55 AF. It is believed that the demons who would become the abhorei flee in this year.

83 AF. Lucifer returns with the first mortal soul to be found in Hell.

90 AF. The demons are dispatched throughout the Pit to search for more souls.

95 AF. In this year, one hundred and nine angels are executed for crimes against the Infernum.

100 AF. Lucifer establishes the orders of Thrones, Dominions and Archangels to oversee his domain.

102 AF. The iliaster famine effectively ends when Astyanath and Zethu refine the art of torture sufficiently to extract large amounts of plasmic iliaster from the damned souls.

103 AF. Lucifer creates the Lethe Clouds.

110 AF. The Morningstar dawns. Lucifer announces that the Infernum has overcome its greatest trials. In celebration, the nine citadels of the Malebolge are built.

111 AF. The first living mortal enters Hell through a gout. She is captured and subjected to tortures beyond imagining by demons. Over the next few years, more and more mortal slaves are captured.

128 AF. The first mortal slave is born in captivity.

141 AF. The provinces of Upper Hell refuse to send souls back down the Pit. The Archangels begin a long war of pacification. In the chaos, mortal slaves led by a warrior named Bor escape to the First Circle.

145 AF. Arikiba builds a fortress on the Fifth from which he guides the war of pacification.

152 AF. The war of pacification is deemed a failure; Lucifer is forced to lay the spell of the Covenant on the rebellious demons of Upper Hell. The Dominions protest this act, claiming that it will weaken their demon servants in the war on heaven.

153 AF. The succubi Soline and Riethii enter the halls of the Archangels.

160 AF. Zethu begins to codify the system of magic that would become sorcery.

186 AF. Construction of the fortresses on the Second Circle begins under the shadow of the Lethe Clouds. Mortal slaves are used in this endeavour – many escape to form the first of the Branded.

191 AF. The industrial circle production of war material is tripled under orders from Pandemonium.

192 AF. Workers flee the city of Cacophactus. An investigation from the Thrones reveals that the machine city is now alive and sentient. The angels recommend that it be destroyed, but this order is never carried out by the Dominions.

196 AF. The Thrones declare that the armies of Hell are ready for the war on Heaven and privately appeal to Lucifer to lead them.

197 AF. Lucifer orders the Thrones to make ready for war. They send out orders demanding the Dominions dispatch troops and supplies, but less than a twentieth of the requested troops are sent.

198 AF. A second set of orders receives an equally lacklustre response.

199 AF. The Thrones demand that the Dominions and their servants send their iliaster supplies to Pandemonium.

200 AF. The demon army marches on Pandemonium.

The Age of Houses

201 AF. The last of the First Fallen is slain by Sturrach. The only angels left in Hell are those captured by the demons – the rest are dead or fled to the Broken Lands. The battle at the Bridge of the Skinless over

the Styx begins the wars of the demons.

204 AF. Oblurott declares itself Lord of a great House, claiming the territories and rights of the Dominion Domiel.

205 AF. Oblurott claims the entirety of the Third Circle. To legally dispute this claim, Haimon takes on the status of House.

207 AF. The demons meet in conclave at the City of Bileflot. Agents are sent to Pandemonium to discover the status of the Archangels.

208 AF. Soline returns from Pandemonium and declares its independence.

212 AF. Oblurott sends an army down the Pit to take Pandemonium. Jelac rallies resistance against this attempt, and transforms this defensive force into a claim for House status.

215 AF. House Riethii is formed. The four existing Houses – Riethii and Jelac on the Seventh, and Haimon and Oblurott on the Third – are all balanced against each other. Without a clear leader, the wars continue.

230 AF. Astyanath and Zethu part company. Astyanath enters into the service of a demon Lord; Zethu travels to the First and beyond.

233 AF. Astyanath assassinates its master and claims its domain, forming House Astyanath.

240 AF. The Grasping War begins. Demons begin to spill out into the tunnels beyond the Pit.

245 AF. Zethu formulates the basics of sorcery. It manages to transmit these secrets through a portal to corrupt mortals.

246 AF. Sailors on the Sunless Sea are attacked by mysterious warships. Only one demon ship makes it back to the Port of Despair; the other three vessels are carried off by the warships. This raid marks the first contact between Abhor and the Infernum.

251 AF. Sturrach leaves the service of the demon Carthenay and wages a war of conquest on the Fifth.

255 AF. House Sturrach is formed.

277 AF. The first mortal sorcerer appears in the Infernum. He enters Zethu's tutelage.

280 AF. House Glabretch is recognised by the other Houses after fifty years of covert war by Haimon and Oblurott fail to get the Glabretchi out of the Third Circle.

307 AF. The first Priests of the Morningstar appear in Hell.

311 AF. House Carthenay is formed.

315 AF. Jelac is slain by Glabretchi forces – the first of the founding demons to die. This marks the end of House Jelac's rise and the beginning of their decline.

330 AF. Zethu declares itself Lord of a House. Twelve other minor Houses are annihilated by the heavily armed armies of Zethu, while sorcerous attacks remove or bind the commanders of the enemy forces on the Sixth Circle. Within a day, Zethu conquers an

area as large as the territories of Sturrach or Riethii.
337 AF. The first attack by beings from the Broken Lands destroys an exploratory force of House Haimon.

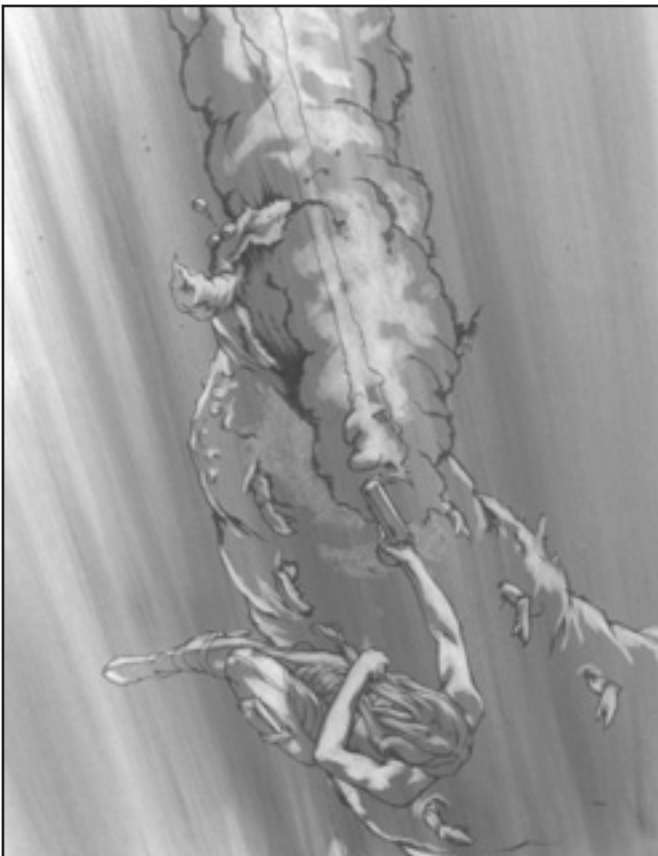
340 AF. A Brokenlander army, lead by three angels, appears through a sorcerous portal on the Seventh Circle. They are met by a temporary alliance of Zethu, Riethii and Astyanath. Riethii herself assassinates the angel holding the portal open, which allows Zethu to close it. Cut off from their support and line of retreat, the Brokenlander army is surrounded and destroyed at great cost. Zethu and Astyanath clash over salvage rights.

341 AF. The Lords of the nine Houses meet in conclave at Bileflot once again, to discuss the threat of the Brokenlanders. The meeting ends with Sturrach killing Astyanath and Oblurott's possessed host.

Age of Sturrach's War

350 AF. An angel is seen in the Second Circle. It is assumed that this angel is an invader from the Broken Lands. However, it is soon discovered that the angel has no memory, and is in fact newly fallen from Heaven. Haimon and Oblurott armies destroy each other while trying to capture the angel. Riethii herself comes to take custody of the fallen angel.

361 AF. A traitor in House Zethu reveals the secrets of sorcery to House Riethii.



382 AF. The fortress of House Jelac on the Seventh Circle is destroyed by Riethii forces. The House Lords are forced to retreat to their citadel on the Eighth.

399 AF. The Riethii conquer the remainder of the Jelac holdings on the Seventh.

421 AF. Houses Sturrach and Carthenay ally and launch a furious counter-offensive against the Riethii. The mercenary city of Golgotha grows from a tiny hamlet to a great camp as mercenaries flock to the war.

450 AF. The Grasping War ends as more and more of the attention of the Pit is focused on the Riethii-Sturrach-Carthenay war.

451 AF. House Sturrach turns on the Astyanath holdings. The Astyanath and the Riethii sign the Rose Accord of mutual defence.

454 AF. The Carthenay withdraw their support for the Sturrach war. Carthenay is slain by Sturrach. A bankrupt House Riethii is forced to dismiss its mercenary forces – it is assumed that without the Carthenay iliaster, Sturrach will have to end its war. Instead, House Sturrach pushes into Carthenay territory attacks the Vaults of Mammon.

455 AF. House Zethu joins in the war against the Bloody Army.

460 AF. Despite being at war with four of the seven active Houses, Sturrach now controls almost all the land from the Seventh to the Fourth Circles.

463 AF. The demon Lictat, an independent, rallies nine cities in the Middle Hell to its banner. The cities fight off Sturrach occupation for five months, slowing the Sturrach advance. Infuriated, Sturrach itself returns and destroys Lictat.

501 AF. Zethu manages to summon and bind Sturrach itself. For nine days, the demon Lord rages against the magical confinement, but Zethu manages to keep it trapped. Before Zethu can tame Sturrach, however, both are slain by assassins. House Glabretch is blamed.

505 AF. Despite the loss of their commander, the Sturrach forces continue their war of conquest.

508 AF. Oblurott armies clash with Sturrach forces at the bridges over the Acheron. A bombardment of hellfire drives the Oblurott back. House Sturrach invades the Third Circle.

511 AF. Oblurott's fortress is besieged by the Sturrach. The demon Lord eats all its slaves, then all its guards, then begins to eat its fortress. It dies of a poison. House Glabretch is blamed.

512 AF. House Sturrach is at the height of its power.

513 AF. Unknown to the rest of the Infernum, the last scion of House Jelac starves to Dissolution in this year, still locked inside its citadel besieged by a battered and ruined Riethii army.

514 AF. Behemoth vomits up an army of some

fifty thousand spawn, which destroy the Port of Despair. The Houses believe that the attack came from Abhor, and a punitive fleet is sent across the sea. After fourteen months of bombardment, the Abhor abandon their coastline and retreat into the tunnels. They later corral and capture the new spawn.

520 AF. House Sturrach tries to conquer the Haimon lands. The Battle of the Ash Ghosts is fought on the banks of the Acheron. For the first time in a century, House Sturrach loses a battle with another House. The tide of the war turns.

525 AF. House Sturrach is driven from the Third Circle.

528 AF. Astyanath sorcerers destroy the Sturrach armies occupying the Astyanath territory. House Sturrach is driven from the Seventh Circle.

536 AF. House Zethu creates the first biomechanoids. The shock of this new form of warrior is enough to break House Sturrach's hold on the Sixth.

543 AF. The Sturrach war of aggression ends. This marks the end of the Age of the Houses.

The Age of Chaos

544 AF. With the Houses broken and exhausted by the long war, they are all forced to retreat and consolidate their holdings. Minor Houses, independent city-states and individual demon warlords find themselves able to expand their influence greatly in the absence of the Houses.

546 AF. The Sons of Bori attack and destroy a Haimon fortress on the Second. The House lacks the resources to launch a successful reprisal against the errant mortals.

550 AF. The abhorei armada invades the Seventh Circle, made up of abhorei warriors grafted to the Behemoth-spawn from thirty years ago. Thousands of demons are captured and carried off in chains. A loose alliance of mercenaries and the Pandemonium Guard, together with forces from Dis drive off the invaders. The engineers of Dis launch the *Dreadnought*, which smashes the majority of the abhorei vessels.

554 AF. The last of the House founders, Glabretch, is destroyed by an angelic assault. Nine fallen angels band together and declare themselves the Sword of Light. Over the next decade, they destroy thousands of demons and free slaves all over the Infernum.

555 AF. An experiment by House Zethu in controlling hellgouts is launched. House Zethu claims territory on the First Circle.

548 AF. Haimon forces attack the Zethu researchers, capturing many of them.

559 AF. Hellgouts of unprecedented size and frequency wrack the Infernum and the mortal world.

Thousands of mortals are dragged into Hell. Most are captured, but many escape to reinforce the Early tribes.

594 AF. The fallen angel Purity becomes Lord of House Riethii. Under the angel's rule, House Riethii begins to recover from the wounds inflicted during the earlier wars.

655 AF. Carthenay lends its support to House Sturrach once more as a response to the reinvigorated Rose Accord.

656 AF. Construction of the Minotaur Line begins.

658 AF. The Benandanti attacks begin. Strange wolf-like monsters appear on the Seventh Circle and slaughter the guests at an Astyanath party.

659 AF. House Sturrach attempts to conquer an Astyanath fortress. The fortress is besieged for a month before the Astyanath ruler, Hasimi, offers a duel to the Sturrach leader. This is the first use of a formal duel to decide an inter-House dispute. With the House armies still weakened after the war, this practice becomes more common over the next century.

661 AF. Zethu and Astyanath collaborate on the design of a new form of torture palace. Riethii spies soon uncover its secrets, and from there the design spreads throughout the Infernum. Iliaster becomes much more available, fuelling a renewed war effort.

668 AF. The fortress of the Knights of the Harrowing appears on the Fifth Circle. Their earliest assaults destroy a Carthenay torture palace.

702 AF. The first major war since the Age of Houses begins when Oblurott, Glabretch and Haimon begin squabbling over the control of Harvest Keep.

746 AF. House Lictat is formed and the ninth citadel on the Malebolge is opened. This ends the Age of Chaos.

The Age of Upheaval

748 AF. The Houses meet in conclave to determine the status of Lictat's claim. While they meet at Bileflot, word reaches them that Dis has declared its freedom and that the Covenants holding the demons there are broken.

751 AF. The Free City heresy spreads to another eight cities. Lictat's claim is recognised as none of the other Houses are willing to oppose it with the threat of the Free Cities looming before them.

755 AF. Oblurott forces attack the Fourth Circle, threatening Sturrach holdings as well as the City of Moloch.

754 AF. The city of Owlsbury appears on the First Circle.

766 AF. The present day.

Timekeeping and festivals in the Infernum

There are no seasons in the Pit. The cold reaches will be icy forever, while the places seared and bleached by the red sun will suffer its heat forever. Change brings relief, and there is no relief in the Pit.

Each day begins with the Morningstar rising from Pandemonium. Its dawn is an explosion of fire from all the towers around it as it draws iliaster from the machinery within them, forming a sphere of incandescent soul-stuff. It illuminates the First Circle, then begins to rise. It will light up each Circle in turn, bringing day to each of them.

HOURS OF THE DAY

Hour	9 th	8 th	7 th	6 th	5 th	4 th	3 rd	2 nd	1 st
1	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
4	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
5	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
6	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	●
7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●
8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12	☾	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
13	☾	☾	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
14	☾	☾	☾	○	○	○	○	○	○
15	☾	☾	☾	☾	○	○	○	○	○
16	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○	○	○	○
17	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○	○	○
18	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○	○
19	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○
20	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○
21	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○
22	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○
23	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	○
24	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●

○= Day ●= Night ☾= Witching ☾= False Dawn

When the Morningstar reaches the First Circle, it hangs there for a few hours before dropping back down. Its descent is far swifter than its rise, so it brings a fleeting second dawn to each of the Circles. A day is officially the time it takes for the sun to rise and set, but each Circle's local day is just the time when the sun is visible from it. The period of darkness between the actual day and the false dawn is called the witching, the time when the Morningstar is out of sight in the higher Circles.

For example, a traveller on the Fifth Circle would see the Morningstar rise at the fifth hour of the day. The traveller sweats beneath the Morningstar's glare until the 14th Hour, when the rising Morningstar passes out of sight into the Upper Circles (in the case of the Fifth, the Morningstar cannot be seen when it reaches the upper ethers of the First Circle).

Hour	9 th	8 th	7 th	6 th	5 th	4 th	3 rd	2 nd	1 st
25	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
26	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
27	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
28	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
29	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
30	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
31	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
32	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
33	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
34	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
35	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
36	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
37	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
38	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
39	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
40	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
41	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
42	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
43	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
44	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
45	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
46	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
47	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●
48	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾	●

For a time, the traveller walks in the twilight of the witching as the Morningstar reaches the zenith of its course, then begins to fall swiftly. The brief false dawn comes when the star falls through the Fifth Circle once more, casting a ruddy light over the scorched ground. Once the dwindling Morningstar falls out of sight below the Eighth, true night covers the Fifth Circle – a night that will not be broken until the Morningstar is renewed and leaps forth once more.

The times of light and darkness on each of the Circles are shown on page 37.

DAILY TIME TOTALS

Circle	Day	Witching	False Dawn	Night
First	15	—	—	33
Second	11	3	5	29
Third	11	7	5	25
Fourth	11	12	5	20
Fifth	11	15	4	18
Sixth	11	21	4	11
Seventh	11	26	4	7
Eighth	11	29	4	4
Ninth	11	32	3	2

Even at night, it is not truly dark in the Pit; the light from volcanoes, burning rock, foundries or the storms in the Lethe Clouds provide some illumination, and the Morningstar is aloft somewhere in the Pit for all but two hours a day. The light from the flaming sphere is far dimmer when it is not directly over a Circle, but it still sheds some fiery light down.

The eyes of most demons are well adapted to this constant half-light; for the rest, there are torches and lamps everywhere, fuelled by burning oil. Gas jets or even electric lights keep the newer fortresses illuminated, and wealthier demons can afford to set souls alight to brighten a room.

Days, Weeks, Months and Years

The Infernum has adopted these mortal measures of time from the mortal realm, although their meanings are twisted and altered by the Pit. A day in Pandemonium is at least twice the length of a mortal day, even before the time-slowness effect of the Pit is considered. Weeks and months (30 days to a month) are also used in the Pit, primarily for administrative purposes. There are fluctuations in the fires of the Morningstar that correspond to the lunar cycle on Earth; also, Benandanti attacks normally only happen at the full of the moon.

When demons bother to mention the name of a

month, they use a set of demonic names invented by Haimon; these are in order **Mortis**, **Oblivis**, **Carcis**, **Agony**, **Lament**, **Suffering**, **Ascenis**, **Vincere**, **Throne**, **Inferno**, **Shadow** and **Harrowing**. While the interpretation of some of these names is obvious, their collective meaning has defied scholars. Most agree that Haimon has some cipher in mind, as the idea of the Deathly Lord playing some bizarre practical joke on posterity is unthinkable.

Years, however, are well recognised in the Pit. There is something deeply satisfying to demons about the idea of tormenting a soul for a year or a century, some considerable length of time drawn out to eternity through sheer agony.

Notable Days and Festivals

Demon festivals are correspondingly times of terror and hardship for damned and mortals, as each festival calls for feasts of meat and iliaster as well as all sorts of vile and agonising entertainments, from on-stage flaying to soulshaped puppetry.

New Year (1st Mortis): The beginning of the year is marked by a great feast of iliaster for those who can afford it. Lavish parties are thrown in the Citadels and in Pandemonium. It is traditional to give gifts of souls to one's liege Lord at the New Year. Demons also commonly advance in rank on this date – it is certainly the traditional time to make application for Housefellow status.

Battle of the Ash Ghosts (26th Mortis): This date commemorates the defeat of the Sturrach army by the Haimon Legion of the Dead on the banks of the Acheron, which marked the beginning of the end of the Bloody Army's great conquest. Having a run of successful victories in the run-up to this day is seen as a terrible omen. For most demons, this is a day of paranoia and self-doubt as they remember the greatest conquest in history being stymied by a few damned.

Founding (1st Carcis): Each of the Houses has its own Founding celebrations, marking the day it declared itself a Great House (those of House Oblurott are the most raucous, those of House Riethii the most elaborate). This universal Founding, however, is the anniversary of the creation of the Infernum itself.

Walpurgisnacht (1st Agony): This day is marked by the opening of numerous temporary portals and Hellgouts to the mortal world. Demons in the mortal world must work swiftly, as it is difficult to obtain fresh iliaster without souls. Still, the mortal world is

crawling with fresh, juicy mortals...

Renewal of the Flame (9th Agony): A feast for the Priests of the Morningstar, this is the day when the eldritch sorceries and machines that create the Morningstar are refuelled with the iliaster collected by the Church over the past year. Great chests of crystallised iliaster are brought into the golden vaults of the palace, there to be burnt in the furnaces.

While no thief has ever managed to make off with all the iliaster, there have been several thefts of a portion of this vast treasure.

Gout's Eve (15th Lament): The Great Gout that was triggered by the Haimon attack on Zethu researchers in 548 AF is remembered on this day. It is a day of hunts. Mortals are the favoured prey, and it is a great disgrace if a demon Lord cannot procure at least one or two living mortals to be hunted by its guests.

First Fall (30th Lament): According to tradition, this date was when the first damned soul fell into the Pit, ending the iliaster famine. Those who subscribe to the Luciferine heresy insist that this day is actually the anniversary of the fall of the angels from Heaven.

High Muster (1st Ascenis): The most important date in the military calendar, High Muster is a time for reviewing one's forces. Captains must assemble their hosts and present them to their barons, barons must send a roster of their available troops to their liege Lords and so on. High Muster is also the time for starting wars, as all the troop movements give excellent cover for such an attack.

Slaughter (3rd Vincere): This day marks the death of three House founders; the killing of Astyanath at the Bileflot Conclave, and the deaths of Zethu and Sturrach one hundred and sixty years later to the day. It is as ill-omened a day as any other; it is also known as the Night of Assassins.

Feast of Fools (30th Vincere): On this day, the normal rules of

Hell are inverted to amuse the demons. Covenants must not be invoked, and often the local baron will relinquish its throne to a new demon or even a soul. This folly is merely a ceremony; powerful Covenants are still enforced, and the Lord of Fools is prevented from doing anything that would harm the true ruler of the domain. Still, the chaos of the Feast of Fools amuses the hellkin.

Opening of the Auditorium (1st Throne): The year's deliberations at the Auditorium begin on this day.

Body Dance (25th Inferno): One of the most infamous and strange celebrations of the Hellkin, the body dance is only open to those capable of Possession. During the body dance, the dancers swap bodies again and again in time with the music. It is essentially a form of gambling mixed with a contest of skill and cunning; a demon can end up with a far more powerful body if it times its jumps correctly during the dance. Elder demons participate because not taking part is seen as an admission of weakness and vulnerability.

Oathing (10th Harrowing): The day of Oathing is when demons are expected to renew their Covenants to their liege Lords, pass on tithes and receive promotions or gifts of iliaster. It is akin to a harvest celebration for mortals.



INFERNOGRAPHY

The Nine Circles of the Pit wind around the tormented souls of the damned like a constricting serpent. Each Circle has its own unique threats and torments, each one is a special distinctive form of punishment and agony. The demons claim them all, although the Infernum's reach is limited beyond the mud fields of the Third Circle.

Each of the first Eight Circles is described as follows:

Terrain Features covers the basic terrain of the Circle as a whole, the sort of ghastly landscapes and hellish phenomena that can be encountered anywhere in that level of the Pit. Features too dangerous to qualify as hazards have a Challenge Rating listed, and experience points should be given to characters who get through the hazard. Other features are corruption and so have a Sin Rating listed.

Special Rules describes rules for any unique environmental conditions or special rules that apply in that Circle. Notably, it mentions the Sin Rating of that Circle, which applies to all creatures who spend time there.

The next section, **Notable Locations**, describes unique places and cities in the Circle that are known across the Pit. Similarly, **Fortresses and Strongholds** lists a few of the notable keeps and demonic castles located in that Circle.

Finally, a few **Adventure ideas** are listed.

For the Ninth Circle of Pandemonium and the reaches beyond the Pit itself, more general notes are given, as such strange places do not fit neatly with the ordered description of the Circles.

THE FIRST CIRCLE - EMPTINESS

A deranged Zethu inventor was once exiled to the First Circle. According to the tale, the artificer set off into the desert and built a laboratory out there in the Emptiness. As it starved, inspiration struck it like a thunderbolt and it invented a machine that drew illiaster from nothingness. Delighted with its work,

it strapped the machine to its back and set off for Dis, confident that its discovery would wash away all crimes and disgraces.

It got lost in the featureless desert, and it wanders still. The mortals find strange footprints in the sand sometimes.

The First Circle is a vast wasteland. It is the opening of the Pit and so is a great gaping wound in the flesh of Hell. The Circle is dominated by the oppressive Lethe Clouds that hang above it. Creatures of the First scurry about with hunched backs and downcast eyes, their gaze fixed on the land around them and never on the churning purple miasma of the Lethe.

Despite being part of the Pit and therefore in the very heartland of the Infernum, the First Circle is ignored by most demons. It is a blasted wasteland, virtually devoid of any life other than the hardiest lichen and swarms of black insects. The few outposts of demonic civilisation here are small, isolated citadels sitting atop massive dungeons, where newly-captured souls are kept until they can be transported down the Pit.

Outside the citadels, out in the blank grey unmoving desert of the First, there is still life and death. This rejected circle is home to many of the dissidents of the Infernum, to those demons who fled enemies or stole souls and to the mortal Early tribes of escaped slaves. The empty circle is filled by those who have nowhere else to go.

Terrain features

This is the mark of the hammer. This is the echo of the fall.

The landscape of the First is a blasted, ash-white desert, pockmarked with mountain-sized chunks of scorched debris thrown up by Lucifer's impact. It is the most difficult of the Circles to navigate; there are no major landmarks save different erratics and scorch zones. The traveller cannot even look up higher in the Pit to orient himself with famous touchstones such as Mount Zeberrok or the rising Morningstar. The First is an anonymous limbo-land. Mortal newcomers have been driven insane by its terrible sameness.

Travellers must make a Survival check (DC 20) every eight hours to find their way through the wasteland of

A Cross Section of the Infernum



An Overview of the Infernum



the First; those with five or more ranks of Knowledge (local) may reduce the DC to 10. Failing the Survival check means that the traveller is lost and travels off-course for 2d4 hours. A new Survival check may then be made, but the DC is increased by +5 each time the traveller gets lost. The Survival DC resets to 20 when the traveller finds his path again.

Erratics (CR –)

On occasion, a traveller comes upon souls chained to these rocks. As the rock slowly rolls down the slope, the soul is crushed into the ground. An erratic might turn only a foot every year, so it might take a century for the soul to emerge from the sand once it was buried there by the slow rolling of its prison. In another century, the soul knows, the rock will complete another revolution and it will be buried in the darkness again...

These are huge lumps of hellstone thrown up by the initial catastrophe that made the Pit. They are great irregular boulders, ranging in size from a man's head to a towering mountain. Erratics are surrounded by deep impact craters of powdered rock. The erratics are made of far harder stone than the rest of the plains of the First, so they are choice building material for fortresses and refuges. Hosts of damned souls toil in these quarries, mining blocks of stone. Some of these quarries are still held by one House or another, but some are under the control of renegades and others have been abandoned entirely, leaving a few lost souls to work mindlessly and pile up blocks of stone over and over in great follies.

The erratics are also the closest the First has to gardens; the thin ashy soil of the Circle will not support life nor spawn, but the hot rock of the erratics can be broken down into a rich loam that thrives with foetid half-life. Demons and damned do not need to eat, but spawn and mortals do. It is difficult to raise anything here, as the Morningstar only rarely peers above the central horizon; the First is illuminated primarily by light reflecting off the Lethe Clouds.

The erratics have all been slipping slowly back down the slope over the centuries; some have tipped over the edge and plunged down the Pit, falling mountains echoing Lucifer's initial impact. The demons are aware of this impending disaster; the larger erratics have been buttressed to slow their descent and other demons feverishly calculate the trajectory of mountains, hoping to arrange for their foes to be crushed by an erratic pushed just so. The slipping erratics leave huge scars on the landscape behind them, steep-sloped valleys of crushed stone.

Scarstone (CR1)

The Bori have a large scarstone mine in the heart of their terrain, but the stones are so small they can only be used for arrowheads.

The smaller pieces of burnt rock thrown up are called scarstone. Fields of this substance are scattered throughout the First, although most deposits have long since been gathered up. Scarstone was charged with iliaster during the impact, making it unnaturally sharp and hard. Piercing and slashing weapons made from scarstone weigh twice as much as normal, but do one extra point of damage and have their critical threat ranges increased by +1. Scarstone costs two crowns per pound for the raw material.

Gathering scarstone is dangerous, though, as the razor-sharp rocks can slice an unwary demon open should it fall on them. Scarstone fields are often concealed beneath a thin layer of grey dust, making them very difficult to spot and evade. A character travelling in a scarstone field must make a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a sharp set of rocks; bypassing these rocks calls for a Balance check at DC 5 if the character knows where they are, and at DC 15 if he does not. Failing means the character falls onto the rocks and takes 3d6 points of damage.

Lethe Fogs (CR 3)

It is not that you cannot find your way home. It is that you forget you ever had one.

Normally, the gases of the Lethe gather in a cloud layer approximately two thousand feet above the ground. The vapours rise from the Pit in thick choking columns that spiral around the rising Morningstar until they reach the mouth of the First, whereupon they blossom out into the clouds.

When the vapour columns are particularly thick, and the Morningstar is descending, the confluence of air currents can cause the gases to billow outwards along the surface of the First. These Lethe fogs form leading edges hundreds of miles long, rushing out like hurricanes over the grey plains and coiling around the erratics. A Lethe fog lasts for up to three days before dissipating.

Characters caught in a Lethe fog are not affected as badly as they would be if exposed to the full Lethe Clouds or the river itself, but the fogs can still be quite lethal. A character in the fog must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) each round or be stunned for one round. A character who fails three checks in a row also suffers one point of temporary Intelligence damage.

Being inside a sheltered environment such as a cave or building protects against the worst of the fogs, increasing the time between Fortitude saves from one round to one hour.

A character with five or more ranks of Knowledge (local) can predict whether or not a Lethe fog will manifest in the next 24 hours with a successful Survival check at DC 10. Lethe fogs can form at any time, but there is always a week long fog outburst on Walpurgisnacht.

Sinkholes (CR 3)

The Early tribes are aware of the danger of firmities attacking their food stores, so a traveller must remove every particle of dust before entering a pantry.

The dust of the First Circle is dry and exceedingly fine. It gets into every crack, every orifice. A species of parasitic white insect called firmities have evolved to look identical to a grain of dust. Their infantile forms ride the dusty breezes and sandstorms.

In some places, the dust settles into loose columns that slip away as soon as any weight is placed atop them. A traveller who steps in the wrong place suddenly finds himself drowning in dry dust, slowly slipping down into the ash. This would be terrible enough, but a worse fate awaits the victim; the full-grown firmities and their queens dwell at the base of these sinkholes. They can sense the vibrations caused by a drowning victim and swarm up through the dust. This movement not only allows the firmities to start to strip the victim's flesh from its bones, but also cause him to sink even faster.

Spotting a sinkhole requires a DC 10 Spot, Search or Survival check. A character in a sinkhole starts sinking. He sinks at a rate of one step per round, and will be submerged after a number of steps equal to five + his size modifier (Tiny or smaller -8, Small -4, Medium +0, Large +4, Huge +8, Gargantuan +12, Colossal +16). A character may make a Balance check at a DC of 10 + the size modifier to stay still and not sink that round. If a character slips beneath the surface, he starts to drown as per the normal drowning rules. A character may make a Swim check at DC15 to move five feet through the sand. If a character attempts any action other than Balancing and fails, he slips down an extra step.

If a character sinks three steps in a row, he awakens the firmities. The DC for all Swim or Balance checks increases by +5 and the character takes 1d4 points of damage each round while he is within the sinkhole.

Sandstorms (CR 2)

*'Rise with the dawn. Ride with the morning wind.
Hide from the noon. Raid with the evening wind.
Flee with the night.'*

— Bori Teaching Song

The winds of the Infernum are curiously predictable. As the Morningstar rises, it heats the air around it and creates zones of low pressure at the mouth of a Circle, causing the winds to rush out from the edges of the land towards the centre of the Pit. Once the star rises out of that circle, the air cools and the winds rush back the other way. The howling winds are a constant noise in the Infernum, like the screams of pain.

When the Morningstar rises especially high into the First, it creates unusually violent winds that whip the dust up into a sandstorm. Visibility within the storm is cut to 1d10 x 5 feet and all Listen, Spot and Search checks suffer a -4 penalty. Anyone exposed to the fury of the storm takes 1d3 points of nonlethal damage every ten minutes.

It is possible to avoid the worst effects of the storms by travelling through tunnels and gullies. The Early tribes use sandstorms as cover to launch attacks on demon estates and fortresses.

Special Rules

Each day, any creature not in a sheltered or purified area suffers exposure to SR1 Corruption.

Hellgouts

The maw of Hell is hungrier every year. Once it was content with individual sinners; now, whole nations fall within its jaws.

As the uppermost section of the Pit, the First Circle manifests the most hellgouts of any of the Circles. A hellgout occurs when Hell and the mortal realm overlap for a brief period, drawing places and people from the mortal realm into the abyss. Hellgouts cannot be predicted accurately in advance; they are caused by the build-up of a sort of spiritual pressure, but it is impossible to tell how and where this pressure will be relieved until the gout begins.

The first stage of a hellgout is the Shadowing, when Hell begins to impinge on the mortal world. From the perspective of a mortal within the Shadowed area, the world becomes darker. Buried madness comes to the fore, buildings and trees warp into disturbing shapes,

there are echoes and movements where there should be no sound or light. To the demons, the Shadowing creates a shadow image of the mortal world, letting them observe it dimly, as if through a clouded glass. The Shadowing lasts for up to a month, but most are considerably shorter.

The second phase is called the Twisting. Those within the Shadowed area – in either realm – find themselves unable to leave by any means save sorcery. Roads twist back on themselves, vehicles break down and so on – all routes out of the hellgout fail to function. The mortal realm draws closer to Hell, so both mortals and demons are existing on the same level of reality and can interact. The Twisting lasts for half as long as the Shadowing did.

The final phase of a hellgout is the Opening, as the Twisted area opens back up to Hell. The hellgouted zone is now completely removed from the mortal realm – indeed, space in the mortal realm will ‘fold’ back into place over the stolen land, leaving the hellgouted region as nothing more than a half-remembered folk tale. The structures and life of the hellgouted region now take root in Hell, although they rarely last for long. The plants wither, the animals starve, and the buildings are looted by the demons. Any mortals who survived the Twisting are normally chased down and captured unless they escape to the Early tribes.

The spiritual pressure that gives rise to hellgouts can be observed and tracked through Zethu ingenuity. The sages can (with Knowledge (arcana) checks) predict the likelihood of a hellgout. This is roughly on a par with predicting an earthquake on Earth. Houses Zethu and Haimon have both experimented with forcing and guiding hellgouts.

Eternal Thirst

‘Hot enough for you?’ croak the slavers, who are not known for their original humour.

The dust and dry air of the First Circle gives rise to the cheap method of torture called Eternal Thirst. Souls are staked in a ring around a pitcher of water. The water is just out of reach, no matter how much the souls strain. Some demons even reshape the soul’s forms so that the act of moving closer pushes the water away. Their remembered tongues swell and turn black as the heat burns the moisture from their plasmic bodies.

Duration: 1 day

Damage: 1d3 Constitution.

Torture Modifier: +1.

Ability Score Damage: 1d4 Wisdom, 1d4 Charisma.

Cost: Each set of shackles costs 3 horns.

Demons of the First Circle use eternal thirst to deal with gangs of souls; as the demon does not need to be present while the souls are in pain, it can hunt out more souls and perform other tasks while iliaster accumulates in its den.

Notable Locations

The First has few famous locations. No rivers rise from its dust-dry soil; no great mountains or valuable mines are located there. It is a wasteland in more than one way; it is an empty wilderness and a refuse pit for the demons.

The Precipice

The angel Tercel of the Knights of the Harrowing was once captured. Its wings were bound and it was hurled off the Precipice. It managed to cut its bonds while falling and catch an updraft. Since then, condemned angels and fiends have their wings removed before being thrown.

A narrow outcropping of rock arcs out into the void above the Pit. From this stony tongue, a demon might fall straight down through all eight Circles. The Precipice has been used as a ceremonial execution site for demons who have offended against the entire Infernum. It is exceedingly difficult to offend the whole Infernum – what is hated in one Circle or House is applauded in another. The only demons executed at the Precipice are those who have allied with the enemies of the Infernum, such as the angels of the Broken Lands or the folk of Abhor.

The Precipice is also a favourite site for duels – both participants are tied to the rock with sturdy entrail-ropes attached to their tails or ankles. The two then fight; the usual tactic is to push or force the opponent over the edge, then cut the rope that prevents it from plummeting to its doom. Fighting on the Precipice requires a Balance check every round, with the DC ranging from 5 to 30 depending on how far along the arc of stone the fighter is.

Owlsbury

‘Strange events not a cause for concern, say police.’

– Headline in last issue of Owlsbury Gazette

The abandoned town of Owlsbury was caught by a hellgout in the mortal year 1888, dragged out of its

peaceful existence as an English university town and cast down into Hell. The town materialised in a sheltered hollow on the First Circle, so its buildings have largely survived despite the constant winds and sandstorms. The outer sections of Owlsbury are buried beneath shifting white sands, but the university and cathedral in the heart of the town are still intact.

The town centre itself has been deliberately restored by demons of House Glabretch, who want living humans for their experiments. They know that newcomer mortals wandering through the Circles would see a largely intact human city as a godsend and refuge, so the Glabretchi wait until some mortal enters the city before swooping in to capture the unfortunate and whisk him off to the laboratories.

The university is the home of the sorcerer Albert King, formerly a professor at the university. King's initial research into occultism drew the hellgout to Owlsbury; the Shadowing and Twisting drove him insane. His household contains numerous minor servitor demons as well as a trio of newcomer mortals who are trapped under his protection.

The gothic cathedral on the edge of the university district is still sanctified, making it a useful tool for Bori tribesmen hoping to cast the *purification rite*. The tribes know the Glabretchi watch the approaches to the town, so they have dug a tunnel that connects to the cathedral crypts.

The Medusa Flats

The faces are always familiar, but you cannot place where you know them from.

A vast region widdershins of Harvest Keep is known as the Medusa Flats. At first glance, the Flats look little different to the rest of the Circle; a great dull plain covered in a layer of white dust. As a traveller pushes on deeper into the flats, he begins to notice white statues standing in agonised poses in the dust. These statues are petrified souls; when the wind picks up into a sandstorm, the dust accretes in and around mortal souls. A damned soul becomes laden down with flying grit until it solidifies and is trapped.

This fate also awaits other creatures who travel in the Flats; the dust of the Flats will stick to any creature, regardless of nature, leaving it trapped in a calcite tomb. In some places, two almost identical statues stand within a few feet of each other – here, a mortal walked in the Flats, died, and then their emerging soul was also trapped by the sands. It is possible, when the

air is still, to go out and smash the calcite tombs open to retrieve the souls within.

A character in the flats is safe as long as there is no wind. If there is a wind, the character must make a Strength check each round to keep moving. This check begins at DC 0, and increases by an amount each round proportionate to the wind speed (breeze +1 per round, light wind +2, strong wind +3, gale +4, sandstorm +5). If the check is failed, the character can only move at half speed. Once the DC reaches DC 10, the character only moves at half speed on a success and cannot move at all that round on a failure.

Breaking off the calcite requires a Strength check at DC 20, or inflicting 10 points of damage on the hardness 8 substance. Each section of calcite broken off in this fashion reduces the Strength DC for movement by -5.

Bori Territory

Skulls of hulks, fiends and slavers are impaled on posts all around this land, each one marked with the Rune of Bor.

The oldest and most powerful of the Early tribes control a region of the First circle that extends from the mouth all the way to the far edge of the Pit, and stretches for almost two hundred miles both clockwise and widdershins. This is a region where demons fear to tread – while there are far too few Bori to watch all the long borders of this land, there are enough tribesmen to mount patrols and hunting parties throughout the region. The Sons of Bor are expert demon-slayers, wielding both simple boosted swords as well as stolen demon weapons. The Bori are trained for combat virtually from birth and tested in the greatest crucible for warriors in existence – the battlefields of Hell.

The Bori are nothing if not pragmatic; everything is recycled. If a Bori is too weak to fight, he is trained in sorcery or some other craft. If he is too weak or simple for such a task, he watches the children or is killed and his soul bound to a weapon. Survival of the tribe above all else is the Bori credo.

Bori mercenaries fight on many of the battlefields of Hell. Most of their pay is spent on mortal food from the farms of the Third Circle; while the Bori are experts at wringing crops from the dry soil, they still lack the resources to support their full population. In times of famine, the Bori pragmatism comes to the

fore – their excess members are encouraged to kill themselves and be bound to weapons. Emotion and sentiment are luxuries the Bori cannot afford.

The Bori are perhaps the most tolerated of the mortal tribes; while the Branded are constantly hunted by stalkers and demon armies, the Bori exist in an uneasy truce with the Infernum. There are constant raids and attacks by both sides, but the Bori mercenaries are too useful to the warring Houses to be wiped out. So long as the Bori do not attempt to extend their territory, this détente may continue indefinitely.

The major flashpoints for conflicts are the three dozen demon fortresses located within the borders of the Bori lands. Each fortress is located near a soul field. Well-fortified roads lead out of the Bori lands – the demons may be forced to let the Bori exist in this desolate region, but they will not give its bounty of souls up to some upstart mortal tribe.

There are somewhere between thirty to forty thousand Bori, putting the tribe at its greatest strength in centuries. These are divided into hundreds of camps of around two hundred Bori each, including at least a hundred warriors per camp. At any time, a full third of the camps will be outside the Bori territory on raids or hired as mercenaries. Another third will be guarding the Bori caves and shelters, which contain the farms and foundries needed by the tribe. The rest patrol the lands, hunting demons and spawn.

Each camp includes a sorcerer, a peace-time chieftain and a war-leader. These leaders also participate in the three great councils of the Bori, who elect the three Eldest Sons of Bor who lead the tribe.

Branded Territory

As demons find damned souls much easier to manage than living mortals, the Branded captured by stalkers of the Haimon or Lictat are 'shelled' – killed – before being collected. Their discarded shells litter the charnel canyons.

By contrast to the secure lands of the mighty Bori, the escaped slaves of the Branded are under constant demon attack. The Branded are considerably more numerous than the Bori, but lack the iron discipline of the warrior tribe. The Branded flee through ravines and cave networks beneath the desert, running from stalkers and slavers. Both the Glabretchi and House Lictat have armies of demons assigned to the Branded lands, looking for escapees.

The heart of the Branded is a group called the Broken Chain, which consists of around ten thousand mortals. The Broken Chain have a refuge hidden in the heart of the tribe's territory that has gone undiscovered by the demons. From this refuge, the Broken Chain try to stay hidden while supporting and protecting the other tribe members as they hide from the demons. The Chain also send raiding parties down to the lower Circles, sponsoring slave revolts and break-outs.

The Branded are riven by internal dissent – every member hopes to find his or her way to the refuge and the Broken Chain, but the refuge can only hold a fraction of the fifty thousand or so slaves and their kin who run through the Branded lands. The folk of the Broken Chain must therefore help their kin without revealing the location of the refuge.

Starvation and exposure claim almost as many victims as the demon slavers. The Branded are constantly on the verge of disaster, and it is only through daring raids for supplies and weapons that they can fend off death.

The Brass Pillars

Press your ear to the pillar, and it sounds like the ticking of a tremendous, world-encompassing clock. These are the seconds of the life of the world, being stolen in greedy handfuls by the work of Lucifer.



Hundreds of towering metal pillars jut from the ground all over the First Circle. The pillars stretch into the Lethe Clouds far above. Energy crackles along the length of the structures before draining away into their bases. More portals and hellgouts open near a pillar than anywhere else in Hell.

The Brass Pillars were erected by Lucifer before the Infernum was founded. Their purpose is to steal fragments of time from the mortal realm, allowing change to exist in Hell. These pillars are connected to the ancient clocks located throughout the Infernum.

The power of the Brass Pillars can be drawn off using the *energy tap* ritual. Sorcerers sometimes build precarious eyries on the sides of pillars, tapping the crackling temporal energies. One pillar was toppled by Bori himself, crushing a fortress beneath its cyclopean weight. Its ruins lie two hundred miles clockwise of the edge of the Bori territory. Blasts of energy shoot out from the wreckage, and portals to the mortal realm open and close constantly around it.

Gallfang Plateau

Gallfang the hated! Gallfang the canker! Gallfang forgotten and ignored!

The First Circle is as far from the entertainments and courts of Pandemonium and the Garden of Unholy Delights as it is possible to get. Being exiled to Upper Hell is a punishment – there is nothing here but dust and human barbarians. The only virtue of Emptiness is the number of damned souls and mortals that can be captured here, and most of these prizes are shipped back down the Pit to benefit elder demons.

In Gallfang Plateau, the exiled and punished demons band together. The plateau is crowded with dozens of fortresses of various sizes and strengths. The approaches to Gallfang are guarded by hellhounds, hulks and stalkers to protect the demons from Early incursions. Gallfang is as close as the First comes to a fully-fledged demon city.

Fortresses and Strongholds

The fortresses of the First are primarily physical defences; if a demon is on the First, then it is hardly important enough to be worth attacking with sorcery. The lack of good stone means that the demons must improvise – bone, packed white plaster and expensive soulstone are commonly used. The erratics are the

Agruth of the Gates

The master of the approaches to Gallfang is a hulk of House Riethii named Agruth. Riethii is hardly known for the strength of its front-line forces, so its few hulks have little chance to win glory or disembowel foes. The usual place for Riethii hulks is as guardians for the House fortresses, but this position lead to disaster for Agruth. The hulk became obsessed with a succubus named Kyri, and when she seduced an Astyanath deceiver, Agruth killed them both in a fit of rage.

Having been exiled to Gallfang, Agruth has become sullen and bitter. It takes its rage out on the mortals it captures as they try to sneak into the city, but its anger continues to grow, and the demon now dreams of seeing Gallfang burn out of sheer malice.

one local source of hellstone, but some demons have the wealth to carry material up from lower in the Pit.

Harvest Keep

Some have remarked that Harvest Keep looks like the outline of a slaver, with its corpulent belly, ugly head, and chain-bearing arms. This resemblance is uncanny and quite deliberate.

Even though Harvest Keep's towers reach hundreds of feet into the air and are wreathed in lightning, a traveller always hears the keep before he sees it. The fortress proper is a relatively small castle sitting atop a massive prison capable of holding up to a hundred thousand souls. From a distance, Harvest looks grotesquely bloated. Damned souls are dumped into the prison through chutes; when they are collected, the demons pick up souls with pitchforks and throw them into train-cars. As the demons simply pluck the closest souls, the lightless dungeons of Harvest Keep are filled with souls scrabbling to get as far away from the rails as possible.

The demon section of the Keep has tall towers inhabited by fiends, but the bulk of the denizens are stalkers and slavers. Harvest is primitive and slowly decaying due to its sheer age, but as long as it continues to ship souls down, then it is fulfilling its grisly function.

Bori Fastness

'Dig deep, build strong.'

A typical hiding place of the Bori tribe, fastnesses of this sort can be found throughout their territory. The fastness consists of a small cave network, carved out of the ground by the action of wind and rain. The entrances are concealed behind rocks, and a curtain hangs close behind each entrance to provide extra concealment and to keep out the noxious and corrupting gases.

Bori warriors watch every entrance; they fight in groups of five or six. The chief purpose of these watchers is to raise the alarm in times of danger – there is no shame in fleeing if it will warn the tribe.

The heart of the fastness is the great hall, where all the day-to-day activities of the tribe take place and the bulk of the tribe sleep. There is little privacy and hence no room for shame among the Bori, and they are adept at sleeping in the most noisy or uncomfortable conditions. Passing through the great hall means stepping over sleeping or playing children, ignoring young couples in the throes of lust and walking around the communal cooking fires.

Each member of the tribe has a bundle, kept by their side or hanging in the great hall at all times. This bundle contains food, fresh water, medicine, a weapon and other necessary supplies. Should the fastness be attacked, a Bori can survive for days on the contents of this vital bundle alone.

Specialist tasks like sorcery, healing, metalwork and so on take place in deeper caves, away from the great hall. The only private apartments are reserved for the sorcerer and chieftains of the camp.

Fortress of Agruth

Every demon, even the least imp, is as a wanton and cruel god within its fortress.

Agruth, the doorkeeper of Gallfang Plateau, dwells in a typical, shrine-level fortress for a demon of its low standing and relative poverty. The fortress is carved into the rocky sides of the plateau, hanging directly above the main gate into Gallfang. Dozens of souls hang from the balconies of the fortress, weighed down with lead. The strain of their plasmic bones being stretched by the weight forces them to yield iliaster – Gallfang is too anarchic and isolated to have a House-controlled extraction facility, so demons must fend for themselves and this is Agruth's larder.

The heart of the shrine contains the remains of the succubus Kyri, stolen by Agruth just before it was exiled to the First.

Adventures

The First Circle is as close to safe as Hell gets; while there are lots of raids and attacks by demon slavers, it is so wide and empty that there are places to evade them for years. Mortal characters entering Hell are likely to arrive here first of all, giving them a chance to learn the nature of the Pit before being hurled into a House prison or torture palace.

- ⊗ Mortal or angel characters could be drawn into the problems of the Early tribes. As outsiders of some power, they might be called upon to resolve some dispute or save a pack of Branded refugees from hunters.
- ⊗ Demon characters searching for souls of their own can find them on the First Circle. The lack of House presence makes the Circle an ideal stomping ground for independent or renegade demons.
- ⊗ A sorcerer might hire the characters to escort him to the Brass Pillars, so he can study the arcane flux around them. After all, the last experiment with the pillars worked so well.
- ⊗ A soul trapped in Harvest Keep must be rescued, so the characters need to infiltrate the lightless dungeons below the fortress. Indeed, cunning characters could hide in the unexplored depths of the Keep for years, smuggling souls out or supplying those thrown into the train caravans with tools to escape. Perhaps the characters could even arrange a mass breakout of souls from the Keep.
- ⊗ The First Circle will be mustering ground troops if the Houses ever go to war with the Hadean Kingdoms (see page 126).
- ⊗ And just what is on the other side of the Lethe Clouds anyway?

THE SECOND CIRCLE – TEMPEST

The wind cannot quite drown out the screams; indeed, on certain days in the shadow of certain mountains, the two combine into a keening wail that is unpleasant even for demons.

The jagged mountains and howling winds of the Tempest make the Second Circle the coldest and least

hospitable section of the Pit. Demons are creatures of flame and heat, so the icy peaks of the Tempest are deeply unpleasant to them. Despite this, the Second Circle is heavily contested by the hellkin. It contains some of the oldest and most extensive fortresses outside the Lowest Hells – once, the Tempest Circle was designated the outer line of the defence for Lucifer’s kingdom. It was prepared for a retributive assault from Heaven that never came. When the demons rebelled, they claimed the fortresses and battlements that they had raised under angelic designs, and the wars for control have continued to this day.

Terrain features

This is the ice before the fire. This is the last warning.

The Second is the most mountainous of the Circles; while there may be taller peaks on the Fourth, that Circle is broken up into valleys and flatlands. The Second is a single huge mountain range that encircles the whole pit. The eternal winds bring the average temperature in the Circle down below zero, even when the Morningstar is passing through.

Avalanches (CR 7)

Damned souls sometimes inadvertently form bodies out of ice and snow. These white figures roam blindly across the most unstable slopes, gathering matter like stumbling snowballs.

The combination of high peaks and heavy snowfalls means that avalanches are a deadly peril in the Second Circle. An avalanche can be spotted from as far away as 1d10×500 feet downslope by a character who makes a DC 20 Spot check, treating the avalanche as a Colossal creature. If all characters fail their Spot checks to determine the encounter distance, the avalanche moves closer to them and they automatically become aware of it when it closes to half the original distance. Under optimum conditions (no other loud noises occurring), a character who makes a DC 15 Listen check can hear the avalanche or landslide when it is 1d6×500 feet away. This check might have a DC of 20, 25, or higher in conditions where hearing is difficult (such as in the middle of a thunderstorm).

A landslide or avalanche consists of two distinct areas: the bury zone (in the direct path of the falling debris) and the slide zone (the area the debris spreads out to encompass). Characters in the bury zone always take damage from the avalanche; characters in the slide

zone may be able to get out of the way. Characters in the bury zone take 8d6 points of damage, or half that amount if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. They are subsequently buried (see below). Characters in the slide zone take 3d6 points of damage, or no damage if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. Those who fail their saves are buried.

Buried characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute. If a buried character falls unconscious, he must make a DC 15 Constitution check or take 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead.

The typical avalanche has a width of 1d6×100 feet, from one edge of the slide zone to the opposite edge. The bury zone in the centre of the avalanche is half as wide as the avalanche’s full width.

To determine the precise location of characters in the path of an avalanche, roll 1d6×20; the result is the number of feet from the centre of the path taken by the bury zone to the centre of the party’s location. Avalanches of snow and ice advance at a speed of 500 feet per round and rock avalanches travel at a speed of 250 feet per round.

Stonings (CR 2)

Ow!

The scree and small stones atop the mountains are often carried up by the winds and thrown down on the slopes below, pelting travellers with lumps of sharp rock. A stoning lasts around five minutes on average before the hail abates. A character caught in a stoning suffers an attack each round; this attack has an attack bonus of +3 and deals 1d4 points of damage on a successful hit.

Snowstorms (CR 2)

Artificers are most comfortable in the cold; their mechanical shells are as unfeeling as armour.

The snowstorms of the Second are whipped up by the winds caused by the rising Morningstar. They are even more dangerous than the skin-stripping sandstorms of the First. Again, visibility is cut to 1d10 x 5 feet and all Listen, Spot and Search checks suffer a –4 penalty. The cold also deals 1d6 points of nonlethal damage every 10 minutes to creatures exposed to the fury of the storm; characters with thick fur or warm clothing may reduce the damage to 1d3 points every 10 minutes.

Banshee Winds (CR 1)

Those who have spent long on the Tempest Circle begin to hear voices in the wind. Those who have spent too long here obey them.

As the winds of the tempest howl through the sharp spires and twisted forests of the mountains, they create a high-pitched keening scream. At first, this screaming is merely unpleasant; after a day it becomes painful, after a month agonising and after a year it is maddening. The banshee winds can be heard throughout the Circle, but only have their fullest effect within a mile of the peaks. A character exposed to the banshee winds must make a Will save each day. The DC for this saving throw begins at DC 0 and increases by +1 each day, resetting to DC 0 once the character fails a save. Whenever a character fails a save, he suffers one point of temporary Wisdom damage. This damage can only be healed when the character is out of range of the banshee winds.

Wind Effects

Wind Force	Wind Speed	Ranged Attacks	Creature Size ¹	Wind Effect on Creatures	Fort Save DC
Light	0–10 mph	—	Any	None	—
Moderate	11–20 mph	—	Any	None	—
Strong	21–30 mph	–2	Tiny or smaller	Knocked down	10
			Small or larger	None	
			Tiny	Blown away	
Severe	31–50 mph	–4	Small	Knocked down	15
			Medium	Checked	
			Large or larger	None	
			Small or smaller	Blown away	
Windstorm	51–74 mph	Impossible	Medium	Knocked down	18
			Large or Huge	Checked	
			Gargantuan or Colossal	None	
			Medium or smaller	Blown away	
Hurricane	75–174 mph	Impossible/–8	Large	Knocked down	20
			Huge	Checked	
			Gargantuan or Colossal	None	
			Large or smaller	Blown away	
Tornado	175–300 mph	Impossible/impossible	Huge	Knocked down	30
			Gargantuan or Colossal	Checked	

¹ Flying or airborne creatures are treated as one size category smaller than their actual size, so an airborne Gargantuan demon is treated as Huge for purposes of wind effects.

Checked: Creatures are unable to move forward against the force of the wind. Flying creatures are blown back 1d6×5 feet.

Knocked Down: Creatures are knocked prone by the force of the wind. Flying creatures are instead blown back 1d6×10 feet.

Blown Away: Creatures on the ground are knocked prone and rolled 1d4×10 feet, taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet. Flying creatures are blown back 2d6×10 feet and take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage due to battering and buffeting.

Lightning (CR 2)

Fortresses in the Second include elaborate lightning rods and other electrical defences. More advanced fortresses even harness the power of the storms, torturing their souls with a million volts from every strike.

The Tempest Circle is constantly blasted by bolts of forked lightning. Flying creatures are especially vulnerable to these blasts; a creature flying more than 100 feet above the ground has a 5% (one in 20) chance of being struck in every ten minutes of flight. This chance increases drastically during storms, climbing to 25% or higher per round. Tall buildings are also likely to be struck by lightning bolts.

A creature struck by a bolt suffers 1d6×d6 points of electrical damage, and is allowed a Reflex save (DC 15) for half damage.

Special Rules

The Tempest Circle is SR2 Corruption throughout.

The driving winds of the Circle are exceedingly strong. Unless a character is in a sheltered area, refer to the Wind Effects tabel on page 50.

Thrown Souls

An amusing method of torture used on the Second, Thrown Souls involves hurling a damned off a cliff. The high winds catch the falling soul and smash it off the rocks over and over again. A well-thrown soul can be skipped a dozen or more times off successive cliffsides and mountains.

Duration: 30 minutes.

Damage: 6d6.

Torture Modifier: +0.

Ability Score Damage: None.

Cost: 0.

Notable Locations

The distinction between terrain and construction is blurred in the Second; sometimes, it is hard to distinguish between a worn staircase and a ridge, or a stony mountainside or an eroded castle once raised by the hands of angels. Navigation in the hilly terrain is difficult, made even harder by the oppressive skies – creatures who would normally find their way by soaring up and surveying the land are forced to stay close to the ground by the storms and winds.

The Inferno Line

Many of the slaves who built the Inferno Line were put to death or soulshaped into construction material, so the secrets of the line have been lost. There are fragmentary records describing control rooms carved from heaven-shards and weapons devised by Lucifer and Azazel themselves to counter Heaven.

The Inferno Line is a ring of fortresses and gates that watch the passes down from the First Circle. In ages past, this was the outer line of the defences of Hell, but now its main purpose is guarding the Infernum from Early raids and corralling captured souls. The soul fields of the First are rich enough to justify every House maintaining at least some presence along the Inferno Line.

The Inferno Line was constructed as a single edifice centuries ago, but now is under the control of dozens of House nobles, independents, renegade warlords and thieves. Each castle in the line might be virtually impregnable from outside, but the connecting tunnels are a weak point in the defences. The various factions are fighting a low-intensity war within those dark passageways, sending in spies and assassins. The tunnels are filled with trap after trap, laid down over the centuries to dissuade infiltrators.

House Lictat has invested a great deal of effort in this war, and hopes to gain control of the whole Inferno Line. If the upstarts manage to hold a large proportion of the Line, then they can choke off the Glabretchi and Haimon soul harvesting efforts and establish Lictat as the equal of any of the other Houses.

The Minotaur

The presence of the Hellish train has triggered minor gouts in the past. It now draws boxcars that once went to Belsen or the Siberian gulags.

While the rivers and roads carry the majority of the traffic and trade in Hell, there is also a network of iron rails that winds from the Second all the way down to Pandemonium. This network, called the Minotaur, was a joint creation of Zethu and Carthenay. The rails are iron, laid down by great work-crews of toiling damned, but the junctions and signals are made from tormented souls bound to biomechanical devices.

The trains themselves are living spawn, their flesh warped to give them prodigious strength and size, their bones bolted to iron wheels. The trains have terrible appetites for all tinctures of iliaster, not to mention vast quantities of meat and blood. To keep the trains running, the Minotaur must purchase wagon-loads of fattened human slaves from House Oblurott.

In the Second Circle, a branch line of the Minotaur goes through a Carthenay-controlled gate in the Inferno Line and extends to Harvest Keep. The main station on the Second is in the city of Minos.

Mount Zeberrok

There is a mountaineering club of demons in Pandemonium. These demons do not climb mountains themselves, but instead send damned souls up impossible peaks and bet on which one will fall last. Mount Zeberrok remains unconquered by any of the club's souls.

The tallest mountain in Hell, Mount Zeberrok juts out at a steep angle from the ground of the Second. From its base, it seems as though Zeberrok's peak threatens to cut the Morningstar apart as it passes by. Zeberrok dwarfs the mountains known to mortals, being over three hundred miles tall. The shock of vertigo is enough to kill.

Zeberrok is wreathed in eternal snows and thunderstorms, making it even less of an appealing climb. The mountain is littered with the bones and frozen remains of those who tried to scale it. The very stone seems hungry – fissures have been known to open up beneath travellers, and there are tales of caves that appeared before demons, then closed again when the demons entered the darkness. At times, it sounds like the mountain is breathing, and sensitives have felt a vast and terrible presence in the mountain's shadow. Those who have sailed the Sunless Sea remember Behemoth when they look upon Zeberrok, and shudder.

Numerous villas and small castles lie on the lower slopes, homes to demons who can feel the mountain's power and covet it. The upper slopes have resisted all attempts at colonisation, although the ruins of a monastery of the Priests of the Morningstar are said to be the home of a band of renegade demons fleeing their Riethii masters.

The one being who certainly dwells high on Zeberrok is the angel Amadiel. He has been perched on the very top of the great mountain for over a century, apparently deep in thought or prayer. Any attempts to disturb Amadiel have drawn his wrath. Before coming to Zeberrok, Amadiel followed the Path of the Divine Will and fought the soul-gathering expeditions of the Houses. He gave up this war when the Minotaur rails were forced through to Harvest Keep.

The Tumbling Caravan

The caravan is the best source of dirigibles in the Pit. House Carthenay has offered Nuvvigan's caravan Lesser House status, but the imp refused as it has no wish to be bound to the Lords of coin.

The raging winds of the Tempest often carry light souls off into the sky, dashing them against the mountainsides and spilling their plasm out over the rocks. Being blown off to certain death is a commonplace hazard in the Second.

The Tumbling Caravan dwell on these lethal winds. The Caravan consists of dozens of balloons and dirigibles, roped together and connected by tubes of bloated intestine. Great sails and rudders sprout from the sides of this ungainly composite vehicle. Muscle-bound fiends and beast sorcerers guide the Tumbling Caravan as it rides the winds.

The Tumbling Caravan follows the winds as they circle the Second, visiting various cities and fortresses as it flies. It is a recognised neutral party in the constant wars and skirmishes, making it a welcome visitor and trading partner. The Caravan is filled with spies and double agents, of course, but the fresh souls and supplies it brings are often the only support a beleaguered fortress will get for months.

The master of the Tumbling Caravan is an unaligned imp named Nuvvigan. Secretly, Nuvvigan covets the power and covenant-breaking properties of the Free Cities, and would dearly love to make the Tumbling Caravan one of them. Its duties do not permit Nuvvigan to fly down and investigate Dis, but it still plots about ways to learn the secrets of the Free.

Estates of the Lictat

The Lictat have always been as patient as spiders, so it is perhaps fitting that they make their home in a web. Great spawn-spiders have been living in these peaks since the beginning, which perhaps inspired the Lictat design.

House Lictat has no time to waste. The other Houses have a head start measured in millennia; they have fortified holdings and vast reserves of iliaster. The Lictat estates are like an anthill; activity and construction are everywhere. Thousands of demons and their slaves work feverishly to reinforce the estate's defences and build the foundries and torture palaces the Lictat need.

The steep slopes and impenetrable rock of the mountains left the Lictat with few places to build. They therefore warped many of their demons into spiders and had them spin iron-hard webs between the mountains to provide room to expand. The Lictat estates are an ever-growing puzzle of webways and slanted castles.

The Lictat have a great number of human slaves gathered from the First, as well a large stock of souls. The souls are mostly traded Down the Pit, so iliaster is extracted from the mortals instead. The webs are matted with blood from the torn and hanging bodies. More mortals are wrapped in spider-silk and placed in stasis, waiting for their appointed time of agony. The torture palaces are operating at full capacity, but the Lictat have an iliaster deficit and have no House reserves.

The estates are located very close to the city of Minos, on the same side of the circle. This region was isolated and inhabited only by unaligned and renegade demons before the Lictat claimed it, driving the previous denizens out in a series of punitive assaults. Several fortresses held out against the Lictat, resulting in uncontrolled islands within Lictat territory. These cankers infuriate the House leaders, but the other Houses support these hold-outs with sorcery just to annoy the Lictat further.

Minos

Abandon Hope, All Ye Who Enter Here.

The City of Minos is a trade city, where the souls gathered in the First Circle are purchased and traded. In ages past, when tortures were personalised to the sins and weaknesses of the soul, the fate of a damned soul was obvious. The lustful were bought by the Riethii, the sensitive by Astyanath, the wrathful by Sturrach and so on. Now, when blind machines in torture palaces are employed to torment souls and the Infernum's appetite for iliaster is far greater, it is a seller's market for souls. Minos' streets are crowded by stalkers hawking their latest prizes, slavers driving their stock before them and thieves hoping to snatch up any unattended damned.

If Minos were to join the cause of the Free Cities, then it would be a significant blow to the fortunes of the Houses. Souls and mortals purchased through Minos are vital to the functioning of Sturrach, Oblurott and Zethu. While the city is technically neutral ground, all the Houses have placed a military presence in Minos to keep it from being subverted.

The Lord of Minos is, by tradition, a slaver who also takes the title Minos. Its official title is Judge of the Dead. The current Minos was driven out of its fortress by the expansion of House Lictat and has sworn vengeance against the upstart House. Those loyal to Lictat are often attacked by the Minos city guards, and it is only the sheer distance between the city and the Lictat estates that has prevented open war.

The River Phlegton (Burning Iron)

The Phlegton rises on the slopes of a volcano, vomited out of the basalt cone like a writhing dragon. It squirms and crawls through the mountains along banks of obsidian and glass. The river remains molten throughout its course, although when it flows slowly a crust of pig-iron floats to the surface. The flow of Phlegton is renewed by fresh springs of metal in the foothills, just before it dives underground to re-emerge on the Fourth Circle.

Phlegton has numerous tributaries, most of which are also rivers of iron. Just above the Steel Swamp, three watery rivers dive into the metal of Phlegton. An eternal boiling fog of hot steam rises from this junction, as frozen water meets white-hot iron. The cold creates the swamps, where chunks of cold metal bob in a slowly-moving current until the river reaches the springs.

A character touching the boiling metal of Phlegton takes 3d6 points of fire damage each round. A boat can sail on Phlegton if its hull has Fire Resistance 20 or more.

Fortresses and Strongholds

There are more fortresses in the Second than in any of the other Circles save the Fifth. These are ancient structures built in the earliest days of the Infernum. Constant winds and storms have taken their toll on the castles, so many have collapsed into ruin.

Cities in Hell

The majority of demons dwell in cities. Only a few hardy hellkin live outside the protective walls of a city or fortress. This is partly for defence – every demon has dozens of foes who would delight in his death – but this flocking to the cities is primarily a result of the development of torture palaces. As most demons get their vital iliaster from House-controlled torture palaces, they must stay close to these palaces which means staying in the cities.

Demons who live in the wilderness must have their own sources of iliaster.

Fortress of Saidan

With its black beard and robe of cured human skin, the cruel and vain Saidan is a dashing figure for a Haimon.

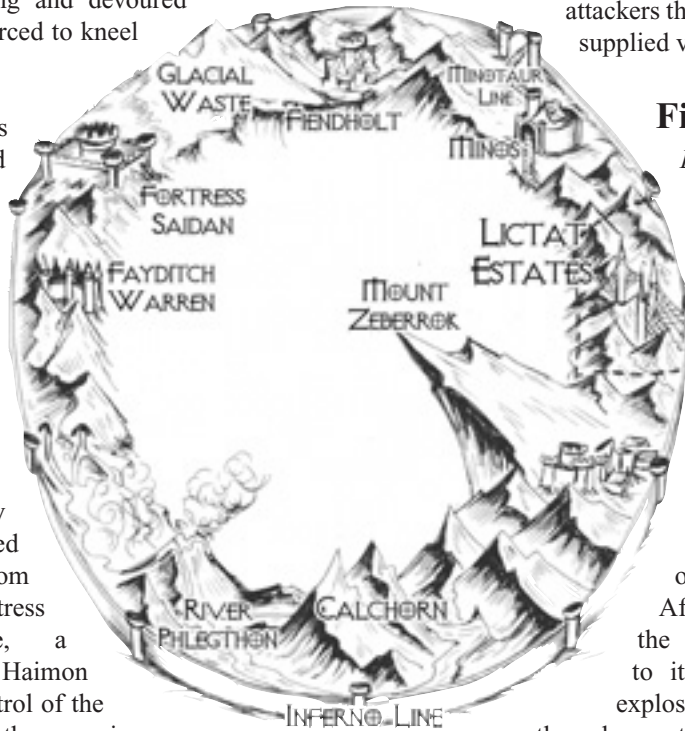
Saidan is a powerful warlord, high in the ranks of House Haimon. It was assigned to the Second Circle five centuries ago, to oversee the House's reaping efforts. Saidan took some nine thousand damned and forced them to built it a fortress out of a mountain. Uncounted tons of basalt were removed to create a great labyrinth of dark passages and grim cathedrals. The heart of the mountain was transformed into the demon's throne room, where great serpents coiled from the spiked ceiling and devoured the heads of victims forced to kneel before the throne.

A dozen armies fruitlessly dashed themselves to pieces on the walls of the fortress, having attacked in the hopes of plundering the rich iliaster coffers and vaults beneath Saidan's throne. Spells and summonings had their energies harmlessly dispersed or channelled into the rock away from the demon. The fortress seemed unassailable, a strongpoint from which Haimon could expand their control of the Second and counter the growing threat that would become House Lictat.

The Tribe of Emnas was a minor Early tribe; originally formed when a group of newcomers from a hellgout fell in with a barbarian prince of the Bori named Emnas. They considered themselves the avowed enemies of Saidan, although the demon Lord barely knew they existed – it had far more powerful foes to worry about. However, Emnas was more cunning than the rest. He tracked down a demon beast of House Haimon by name of Falric, who was the architect of Saidan's Fortress. The tribe of Emnas forced Falric to reveal the secrets of the castle – including the existence of a secret entrance through the lowest dungeons. This entrance was only accessible by entering the unmapped cave networks

beneath the Second.

Emnas and his followers never speak of what they saw and endured in those lightless places. They will sing gladly of what happened afterwards; entering the fortress by the secret route, they broke into Saidan's throne room and ambushed the demon. After a short, bloody battle, Saidan was forced to flee, retreating back to the Haimon citadel on the Eighth. The Tribe of Emnas took possession of the fortress and have held it to this day. The fortress is regularly besieged by demons (usually Haimon forces, but Lictat armies from their home estates as well as Oblurott and Glabretchi from the Third have attempted to take the fortress by force), but the descendants of Emnas and his companions have managed to fend off the attackers thus far. The fortress is re-supplied via the still-secret tunnel.



Fiendholt

By tradition, the Oblurott are not allowed in Fiendholt, out of fear that their weight would topple the fortress down into the gorge below.

The fortress of Fiendholt, like that of Saidan, was carved out of the living rock of a mountain. The fortress occupies the very peak. After Fiendholt was built, the slopes and approaches to it were cut away using explosives and slave labour, so the only way to approach the fortress is by air. For centuries, Fiendholt was occupied only by winged demons. It was constructed by the Glabretchi, who used it as a hunting lodge when searching for mortals. Sturrach forces conquered it within two centuries of its construction.

House Zethu created the first gauntflyers to besiege Fiendholt, and managed to fly a brigade of heavy hulks up to the fortress. In the narrow corridors and confined spaces within Fiendholt, the hulks were unstoppable and the castle fell to Zethu. The Unveilers held Fiendholt for another century, during which time they installed a precarious mechanical lift that reaches the ground below.

Today, Fiendholt is under the control of a fiend once more, a mercenary named Throath. It captured the

fortress by besieging it and forcing the denizens to run out of iliaster. House Zethu would have retaken the fortress and strangled Throath with its own entrails if it were not for the crisis of the Free Cities.

Adventures

The Second Circle is the wild frontier of Hell, where an ambitious and skilled character could become powerful or influential very quickly.

- ⊛ Agents of the Free Cities might be sent to subvert Minos or the Tumbling Caravan. The Minotaur Line runs near Dis, offering a potential route into Minos.
- ⊛ The Inferno Line is basically a hell-spanning dungeon, filled with traps and monsters. House Lictat might pay the characters to help clear it out.
- ⊛ The gravity of Hell is very unusual; close to the ground, 'down' is towards the wall of the Pit, but high in the mountains, 'down' is towards Pandemonium and the floor of the Pit. Characters could hurl boulders or bombs with catastrophic force down upon enemy fortresses if they can find the right launching peak.
- ⊛ A strategic pass through the mountains becomes blocked, preventing the characters from following their normal route. Can they find their way before their iliaster supplies ran out, and who blocked the pass?

THE THIRD CIRCLE - TEARS

Demons cannot cry without a mutation, and even then they weep false tears. It is a mark of the soul to be able to cry. The Third Circle, then, has been known from the beginning as the sorrow of souls.

Hell truly begins here. The Upper Circles are marginal territory, left to renegades and overly-ambitious fools like the Lictat. The muddy plains and burning slicks of the Third Circle have been in the possession of the eldest and greatest demon Houses since the founding. Here are ancient fortresses, cities with grandeur and dignity; here are old and deep agonies inflicted on the world.

Terrain features

This is the trap that closes.

Mud. If there is one word that describes the Third, it is mud. The rains and rivers turn the red earth of the Circle into a thick, gooey, sucking mud. The whole land is criss-crossed by rivers, lakes, canals and inland seas, between which are swamps and damp moors. The few sections of high, dry land are packed full of fortifications and dungeons.

Mud

Hellish mud looks like normal mud, but is, well, evil. Beware the evil mud of Hell!

The ever-present mud flats hinder movement; every step is an effort to pull feet out of the sucking, watery holes in the ground. Movement is reduced to two-thirds normal and creatures suffer a -1 penalty to melee attacks and Armour Class.

In certain especially slick areas, a creature must make a Balance check each round (DC 10) or fall prone. A character can move carefully, taking a -4 penalty to any skill checks or attack rolls made that round but avoiding the need for a separate Balance check.

In other sections, the mud is unusually grasping – a character moving on its surface must make a Strength or Escape Artist check each round at a DC of 10 + the character's size modifier or be unable to move that round. A stuck character loses its Dexterity and dodge bonuses to Armour Class.

Swamps

The flies of these hellish swamps are not insects; they are literally diseases upon the wing. Malaria and cholera and other sicknesses congeal into bug-shaped creatures and take flight.

Many regions of the Third are waterlogged. The water in a bog provides cover for Medium or larger creatures. Smaller creatures gain improved cover (+8 bonus to AC, +4 bonus on Reflex saves). Medium or larger creatures can crouch as a move action to gain this improved cover. Creatures with this improved cover take a -10 penalty on attacks against creatures that are not underwater.

Clouds of black flies and mosquitoes the size of a thumb choke the air above the swamps, while black leeches squirm through the waters below. House Glabretch long ago seeded these swarms with diseases, making them dangerous even to demons.

Rotting carcasses in the swamp leak poisonous gas,

which bubble up through the mud to create gas jets and poisonous miasmas. A character breathing gas must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 10) or take 1d3 points of nonlethal damage. Any flame ignites the gas, dealing 3d6 points of fire damage (Reflex save, DC 12 for half) to anyone caught in the explosion. The size of the explosions vary from 15 feet in radius to hundreds, depending on the size of the gas pocket.

A gas jet is a constant pillar of flame that deals 3d6 points of fire damage to any creature touched by it.

Weep-Canals

In times of rain, the canals threaten to burst their banks and overflow. To contain this excess of water, some weepheads are warped to have huge mouths and stomachs, so they can suck in and contain the muddy foul water of the overflowing canal.

The difficulty of crossing the mud flats means that boats and river-craft are the easiest modes of transport. The Third Circle is densely populated – the Haimon and Oblurott estates both contain millions of souls – but these places are scattered over the vast expanses of the Circle. The network of weep-canals connects the rivers and lakes. They were dug over hundreds of years by gangs of slaves; the canal project was agonisingly slow and plagued by disaster, and there are still thousands of lost souls buried in the mud where cuttings collapsed or dams broke, flooding the half-built canals.

To maintain the water level in the canals, the Oblurott created the Weepheads. Here, damned are soulshaped to have incredibly bloated, oversized heads. Their tear ducts are widened with shovels, and they are tortured with distilled memories of suffering and mortal lives. These memories are gathered by imps adept at teasing sorrows out of damned souls, and use the most affecting ones over and over. The Lethe Clouds wipe the memories of the falling souls, but enough shards of personality and recollection remain for the imps to do their work.

The collected tears from the Weepheads are piped into the canal network through a complex set of ducts and pump stations. The canals are controlled by a guild of Oblurott demons called the Toshin, who demand a fee from any vessel that tries to use the canal network. The size of the fee depends on the vessel and its cargo. The canal network is vast, and has so many hidden backwaters, side tunnels and forgotten locks that it is possible to evade the Toshin and avoid the often extortionate fees.

Special Rules

The whole of the Third Circle has an SR of 3.

Weather (CR Varies)

Souls being buried up to their necks in excrement or being infected with diseases that will reduce them to blobs of agonised plasm for all eternity still find time to complain about the weather.

The weather in the Third Circle is a constant barrage of foulness. It has no pattern or logic to it; one day might bring hailstones, the next lightning, the third a sudden searing drought or falling sheets of mucus from no discernible source. Roll on the following table for weather and its effects:

Roll	Weather	Effects
1-2	None	
3-4	Rain	Ground becomes slippery; flooding becomes a danger.
5-6	Heavy Rain	Massive floods; ground becomes a morass.
7-8	Hail	Creatures exposed to the hail take 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage per round unless protected
9-10	Frozen Souls	Souls encased in ice fall from the skies; a character struck by a soul takes 6d6 points of damage.
11-12	Tears	As heavy rain, but saltier.
13-14	Snow	Temperature drops and environment becomes cold.
15-16	Acid	Creatures exposed to the acid rain take 1d6 points of acid damage each round unless sheltered.
17-18	Slime	The slime clings to whatever it touches. Creatures risk being buried in the slime.
19-20	Complex	Roll again twice and combine the two

Souls Buried Alive

The local torture method of the Circle of Tears, this torment simple involves burying the soul in a muddy grave. The only marker for the buried soul is a reed that pokes out of the mud. This reed is attached to an extraction rig strapped to the soul. The mud tomb regularly floods as the foul weather on the surface percolates through the ground. The soul cannot

drown, but still feels the terror and claustrophobia that comes with being buried alive in a water-logged hole.

Duration: 1 day.

Damage: –

Torture Modifier: +0.

Ability Score Damage: 1d4 Wisdom, 1d4 Constitution.

Cost: 0.

Notable Locations

The Third Circle is divided between the three massive regions controlled by Houses Glabretch, Haimon and Oblurott. Each House has a roughly equal domain in terms of area, although the Oblurott soulfields are considerably richer than those of the others. There is a neutral area between each estate, a war-torn buffer zone inhabited by mercenaries and spies.

House Glabretch's army is untested in battle, as the House has avoided war in the past, but their domain is virtually unassailable – all their lands are covered with a glacier-like sheet of disease-ridden fungus. Anyone invading the Glabretch lands without the Glabretch immunity to disease swiftly sickens and dies. Neither Haimon nor Oblurott have discovered how to drive back this fungal horror, so the Glabretchi always keep whatever they conquer. Fortunately, the Glabretchi can only grow this fungal sheet slowly and it is vulnerable while growing, so they can be contained by force of arms.

In contrast to the Glabretch's untried strength, House Haimon's legions of the damned constitute a veteran fighting force second only to the armies of House Sturrach. Millions of soldiers wait in serried ranks for the Haimon to command them. Most of the noble demons of the House, however, have little interest in conquest. Sometimes, an ambitious and bloodythirsty demon is spawned in the Haimon pits and the legions wage war until their leader is killed or replaced. Haimon's weakness has always been holding onto its gains.

Caught between the immovable fungus of Glabretch and the unstoppable dead legions of Haimon, House Oblurott has been forced into a delicate balancing act – a tricky proposition for demons with a weight problem measured in tonnes. The Gluttonous Ones have managed to blunt the expansion of House Glabretch while nibbling at the territory of House Haimon. The Oblurott's own armies are bolstered

with mercenaries – indeed, the Oblurott estates are currently garrisoned mainly by mercenaries, while the House armies besiege the Sturrach estates on the Fourth. A concerted attack by either Glabretch or Haimon, coupled with a Sturrach sally could shatter the Oblurott forces and cost the House half its estates, but the Gluttonous Ones have always bitten off more than they could possibly consume.

The River Acheron (Foul Waters)

The waters of Acheron glisten with an unpleasant sheen at the best of times; in other places, it runs thick and slow, befouled with weeds and pollutants and mud. It is more like a slow-moving slime trail left by some tremendous snail than a river. Acheron winds its way like a serpent coiled around the Third Circle, marking a rough boundary between it and the Fourth. The Acheron has no discernible mouth or source, making it more like a moat or flooded trench holding all the dregs of the Circle of Tears.

Touching the Acheron is SR4 Corruption. Swimming in the Acheron is relatively easy, as the river is so thick (Swim check DCs are reduced by –5), but those caught in it drown quicker (a character can only hold his breath for half as long when submerged in the Acheron).

Huge bridges of stone arc over the Acheron from the Fourth Circle, while great canals and tunnels dive under the mountains to carry the thick waters down the Pit. Branches of the Acheron flow down to the all the Circles of Middle Hell, where it is used as a dumping ground for the industries of the Fourth and Sixth.

The River Phlegton (Burning Iron)

Phlegton never quite surfaces in the Third Circle, but the River of Burning Iron does flow through a baked tunnel only a few hundred feed below the ground in part – close enough to make it worthwhile for both Haimon and Oblurott to dig down to tap the flowing metal. The foundries of the two Houses are located in deep cuttings in the mud. Fortifications protect the valleys from being collapsed in saboteurs and invaders.

The Grand Canal

The Toshin blame the Branded for the loss of their great work, so they delight in drowning ex-Branded

souls over and over.

The crowning accomplishment of the canal network was the digging of the Grand Canal, a trench seven hundred miles long linking the Acheron and its downward tributaries with the marshes and lakes of the upper section of the Circle. All the canals were fraught with difficulties and disasters, but the Grand Canal was the worst by far. Attackers from the Branded tribe sabotaged one of the digging engines, collapsing the canal on both demons and damned alike.

The equipment used in digging the canal included acids and sorcerous compounds, which combined to create a substance like that found in spawning pits. Buried in the earth, demon flesh and metal and damned plasm melted together and merged.

The thing that crawled from the ruins of the Grand Canal was a worm three miles long, with innumerable faces and legs and claws and mouths that screamed constantly. Metal plates and stones embedded in it cut gaping holes in its flesh, which leaked a slurry of decaying organs and earth. The Grand has been crawling through the mud of the Third for five centuries now, and shows no sign of giving into its agonies or starving to death. It is a special bane of the Oblurots, as it rampages through their croplands regularly.

Lake Marrow

Sometimes, cracked bone fragments wash up on the shores.

Lake Marrow is the borderland between the Haimon and Glabretch territories, a wide expanse of pus-white liquid that resembles nothing so much as bone marrow. Ships slowly churn their way across the slimy lake; in times of war, the Glabretch launch chunks of fungus laden with war-demons while the Haimon legions sail or even walk across the bottom of the lake.

The Oblurott armies sometimes sail down the canals and attack the fortifications on either side of Lake Marrow, hoping to push the other Houses back into balance or trick them into striking at each other.

Lake Marrow is inhabited by strange spawn, which exist nowhere else in Hell.

The Plain of Bones

A mortal palaeontologist died and fell into Hell. The Lethe Clouds did not steal very much of his memory, so

he remembered his trade. He thinks he's in Heaven.

One of the mysteries of the Third, the Plain of Bones is a great ossuary that stretches as far as the horizon. The bones are a mix of animal, mortal, spawn and demon bones, but no-one knows where they came from. The bones were there when the first demon explorers reached the Third and may even have been there when Lucifer first took flight in the skies of Hell. Billions of bones are piled on billions more, extending miles deep under the mealy surface.

The Plain provides raw material for various demonic industries, such as glue factories, so hosts of souls and lesser demons are employed in great bone gangs to gather shards and ship them down the Pit.

Estates of the Glabretch

Oddly, the Glabretch lands closely resemble the most beautiful section of the Riethii Dream-estates on the Seventh. It is not known if the Putrid ones are mocking the other House, or if the moliata desires to be beautiful.

The Glabretch lands are a bizarre dream-landscape that sprouts in alien angles and shapes from the fungal carpet underfoot. Life is everywhere in the realm of the disease-lords, but it is all beset by a sickening, twisted rot. The demons of House Glabretch dwell in the borderland between life and death, where life is turned in on itself and becomes foul; they live in rotting flesh, in pestilence, in cancer, in all the weaknesses and sicknesses of the body.

The fungal covering of the Glabretch lands is called the moliata by those within the House. It covers over half their territory, forming a large ring around their holdings. Other patches of the moliata support the Glabretch cities and fortresses. The areas not choked by the fungus are the rivers and canals, and the infamous testing ground where creatures infected by experimental diseases and sent to die.

The majority of the Glabretch's subjects are demons, spawn and souls. Souls are the most numerous, but also the most unsatisfying. It is possible to develop diseases that affect damned souls, but these usually just result in the soul dissolving into a puddle of plasm. Demons and spawn are far more satisfying targets, capable of experiencing extreme agony and discomfort. The Glabretch military is based on germ warfare, and this has proved exceedingly successful in the past.

However, the true delight for the Glabretch is infecting mortals and animals. The creatures of the mortal realm get sick in far more interesting and painful ways. The little chemical factories of their cells create fascinating interactions with bacteria and diseases. The biology of spawn or demons is a crude thing, propelled by supernatural forces and brute desires, but mortals are complex works of organic art that can be beautifully corrupted and desecrated by the Glabretchi. The House consumes as many mortals as it can get its hands on, paying twenty or more oboli for a living human. Mortal animals are equally sought after – there are zoos in the Glabretch territory containing thousands of animal and crossbreeds bred as test subjects.

Every Glabretch is expected to drag its surroundings down into foulness, to desecrate beauty and create pain. The culture and pleasures of the Glabretchi are quite different to those of other demons; they are quite alien to the rest of the Infernum. The power games and infighting of the other Houses are replaced by subtle contests of artistic suffering and a common sense of being under siege. The Glabretchi know that the rest of the demons would destroy them if they could, and it is only through new and more powerful corruptions that they can survive. One day, it will be all of the Infernum against the Glabretch.

Each Glabretchi fortress, then, contains laboratories and prisons where subjects can be experimented on. Not every demon has the talent for such work, but they all try anyway, spitting out a million ghastly failures for every even more ghastly success. The fortresses sit above great greenhouses and fields where the demons breed strange new species and test subjects – the Third Circle has the most fertile soil in Hell, so both the Oblurott and the Glabretch have their slaves till it.

The fortresses are connected by the Glabretch variation on the screamer lines used in the lower circles. Vast clouds of flies swarm constantly between the citadels of the Glabretch; by speaking into these clouds and having the flies change the pitch of their wings, messages can be sent swiftly back and forth. Almost every tool and weapon used by the Glabretch is alive on some level, from parasites bred to torture damned souls to biomechanical hellcannons that waddle to the front lines and ejaculate blasts of hellfire at the enemy.

Estates of the Haimon

Even the bells toll quietly here, like the closing of tombs.

By contrast to the horrible fecundity of the Oblurott estates and the riot of decay in Glabretch territory, the Haimon estates are cold and empty and dead. The Third Circle is one of the few places where living beings can survive in Hell – there are few blasts of fire from the sky, there is water to drink and soil that can sustain some measure of life – but the Haimon territories are utterly dead. For hundreds of miles, there is *nothing* save the damned and their demons. Not even spawn live in the Haimon estates.

The Haimon are alarmingly focused for demons. While the other Houses waste energy and iliaster in pointless wars, empty lusts and Byzantine plots that end up countering themselves, the Haimon share with their Glabretch neighbours a sense of purpose. The Glabretch are concerned with preserving themselves against attack, but the Haimon have far higher and more mysterious aims.

Millions of souls toil in the Haimon estates. They eschew modern, efficient methods of torture such as plasm churns and torture palaces, preferring to put their souls to work. Haimon-branded damned work in forges and factories and dungeons, straining and suffering as they serve. Some iliaster is gathered from this pointless effort, but only a fraction of the wealth the Haimon could extract. With their customary forethought, the Haimon have prepared torture devices for all their souls allowing them to literally liquidise their assets swiftly.

The chief activity in the Haimon estates is the construction of temples and fortresses. The Haimon mastery of sorcery and necromancy is equalled only by the Zethu, and the Haimon have had far more time to prepare and build. Great ziggurats and ritual monoliths have been raised by the endless labour of the dead as part of ancient sorcerous patterns and spells in stone. The Haimon territory is said to be a single huge fortress that has been under construction since the very founding.

The Haimon legions of the dead are housed in barracks and camps stationed throughout the Haimon territories. No-one gets in or out without the knowledge of the legions – the size of the legions is known only to the commanders of the Haimon defences and even they must use Zethu calculating engines to keep track. Every soldier and murderer who ever died has a place in the legions. The dead do not sleep or tire, so the Haimon can station guards at a post for decades without re-supplying them.

The Haimon libraries are located at the heart of their

territory, defended by thousands of troops and the strongest of wardings. These great libraries are made of bone and soulstone. The 'books' are damned souls, soulshaped into the form of great tomes. Their minds have been blasted so they have no volition or desires, but have a perfect and all-encompassing memory.

The Haimon estates extend beyond the Third Circle, crossing into the Fourth over vast causeways and mile-wide bridges over the river Acheron.

Estates of the Oblurott

One rarely-considered aspect of the Oblurott diet is the need for surgery. Demons were never intended to eat food as the Oblurott do; they were expected to live on iliaster alone, as angels do. The Oblurott must therefore cut open their stomachs or implant excretory organs to cope with their banquets.

Unlucky Oblurott who cannot manage such precautions have been known to explode.

The Oblurott are always hungry; their estates are concerned with producing the vast amount of food they desire, and consuming it. Such things as defence and conquest are secondary to consumption. Food first, then the world.

This hunger has driven the Oblurott to heights of inventiveness and grossness. Their fields are unnaturally rich and fertile; they accomplish this by burying souls under the earth and channelling their iliaster into the crops. The spawn that thrive on this bounty grow fat until they are chopped up in the Oblurott slaughter-houses. In other fields, humans are forced to eat and eat until they becoming living *foie gras*. Whole dynasties are bred for a particular flavour in their meat.

A newcomer mortal would recognise the shape of the Oblurott estates. Of all the demon holdings, they are the closest to mortal lands. Every fortress is like a

manor house, surrounded by farmlands and hunting grounds. The produce of the land is gathered by slaves and brought into the manor for the demons to feed on – and feed they do.

To maintain their wealth, the Oblurott adopt the newest torture methods and devices from the ingenious minds of the Astyanath and the Zethu. They hunger for novelty in all things – new foods, new tortures, new weapons, new conquests. An Oblurott with a full stomach is a dangerous thing; as soon as it has enough food for the moment, it begins to hunger for other things...

While the Haimon might gather more souls from Upper Hell, and the newcomer Lictat are more successful, the Oblurott have an established position as supplier of fresh souls to the lower circles. The House has long-established trade agreements with powers like Carthenay and Riethii. There are dungeons and prison cells on the estates where these trade souls are kept. As the Early tribes often raid such dungeons (knowing that the demons cannot survive without iliaster extracted from souls), the Oblurott have set up all sorts of traps to catch fresh mortals for the table.

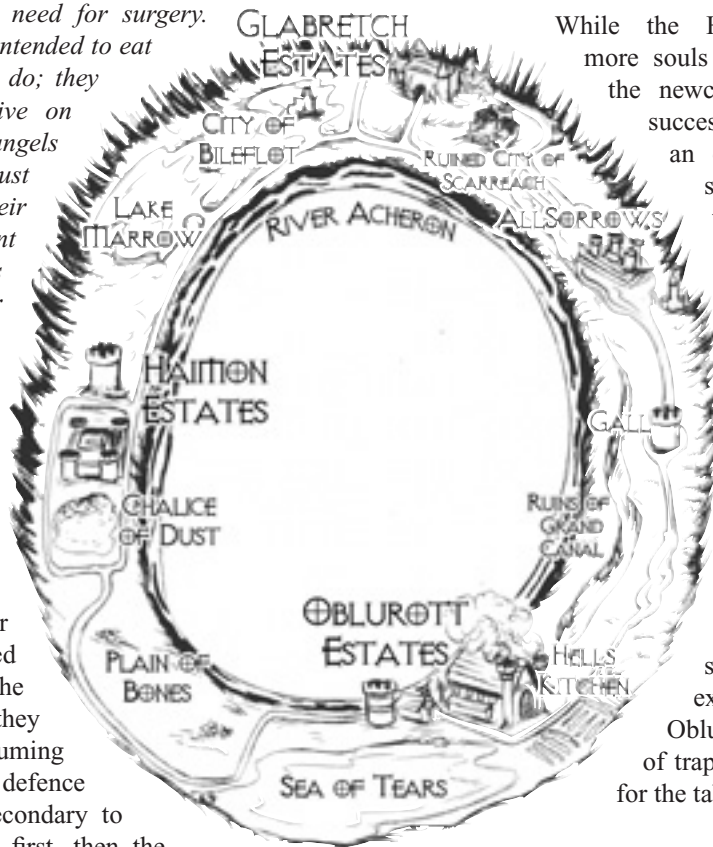
Perhaps the most distinctive trait of the Oblurott estates is the smell rising from a thousand ovens, the smell of slaughter-houses and offal, of crackling flesh and breaking bone.

Their food tastes of tears.

Free City of Allsorrows

The usual ports used when the barges dock at the edges of the canals have been destroyed or occupied by the Oblurott. Agents of Allsorrows fly or swim ahead of the barges, looking for safe harbours.

The City of Allsorrows is built on a flotilla of barges. It sails the canal network, breaking into convoys to



slip down the narrow channels, then reforming when it reaches the Acheron or Lake Marrow. Allsorrows collects souls from stalkers on the upper side of the Third, then transports them down for trade with Carthenay buyers.

Now, Allsorrows has become part of the Free City heresy. The damned are legally free when on board, but it still purchases slaves from the stalkers. They must provide iliaster to the city's demons to work off their debt – a process that takes decades. Allsorrows has been attacked several times by Oblurott forces, and has taken refuge at Lake Marrow.

The Lord of Allsorrows is a bloated slaver named K'us, formerly a thrall of the Oblurotts.

City of Bileflot

Bileflot is best known for being the site of the disastrous Bileflot Conclave; it is still a name of ill-omen.

Bileflot sits on a lake of acid. The fumes from this foul lake rise up in great mustard-yellow clouds, making the air above the city unbreathable. The city itself is encased in a great iron dome hung with chains. Bileflot is noted as being neutral territory – the boats that go to Bileflot are never attacked by the Houses, and it is used as a meeting ground for conclaves where violence is forbidden.

Fortresses and Strongholds

The Third is crowded with fortresses. The grandest belong to the Haimon, but great keeps of fungus and iced bile (for the Glabretch) or red meat and stone (for the Oblurott).

The Crawling Castle of Lady Roach

The chirps of the Crawling Castle are like high-pitched earthquakes as it passes.

The Crawling Castle is not one of the landmarks of the Glabretch territories. It moves too much.

Hundreds of years ago, it was an ordinary insect, crawling over the agonised faces of the infected damned. It caught the eye of an ambitious Glabretch demon, who decided to make the insect a personal project. She infused the bug with iliaster and putrid magic, making it grow bigger and bigger. It was fed flakes of meat, then scraps, then gobbets, then heads,

then whole carcasses.

Today, it gobbles down herds of spawn and whole chain-gangs of slaves each day. The cockroach's chitin armour has been hollowed out and turned into a warren of tunnels and corridors; towers and siege weapons are mounted on its hairy shoulders. The mistress of the Crawling Castle controls her monstrous home from a chamber embedded in the insect's brain. She took the title Lady Roach out of pride for her creation.

The Crawling Castle is one of the key links between the Glabretch holdings on the Third and their outlying estates on the Fifth; it must crawl and leap over the mountains of Toil on the Fourth Circle, a difficult and laborious process during which the Crawling Castle comes under assault by bandits and Oblurott armies. Within its halls, Lady Roach works on a new project – breeding magical locusts that will strip the Oblurott lands bare of food.

The Chalice of Dust

A whirlwind hangs in the sky over the Chalice, held there by Haimon sorcery. Should the Chalice be threatened, it could be sucked into the whirlwind and moved elsewhere.

Four hundred years ago, House Glabretch bred a species of astral parasite that could crawl into the brains of the Haimon legionnaires and disrupt their thoughts. A Glabretch army invaded in the wake of this biological assault, smashing through lines of ghost warriors who were unable to think. The vile army drove deep into the territory of the Necromancers, looting and pillaging as they went. Eventually, they came to the infamous fortress known as the Chalice of Dust.

They never returned.

From outside, the Chalice of Dust looks like a bowl-shaped valley cut into the ground and filled with a shifting cloud of choking white dust. Every grain of this dust is a damned soul, transformed by necromantic arts. The dust is compelled to obey the commands of the Haimon demons – should a demon desire a sleeping chamber or a banquet hall or a gaol cell, then it need merely command the dust, and the mutable walls of the Chalice of Dust will reshape themselves. Should the demon wish to have the walls flood the lungs of an intruder, they will do that too.

The damned servants who dwell in the Chalice of Dust must discover new paths through the fortress

each day. Many are trapped in moving walls, but each change in the layout of the corridors will free other trapped souls, and to the Haimon, one damned is interchangeable with any other.

Hell's Kitchen

A tribe of mortals lives in the floorboards and cellars of Hell's Kitchen. They have been there so long that they have degenerated into something like rats. Their mutant children even have vestigial tails and thin fur.

The smokestacks of Hell's Kitchen can be seen for miles around. Demons stand atop each smokestack, waiting to grab souls floating on the updrafts. The mortals cooked to death in the ovens release their souls, which are caught as they fly up and served for dessert. Few mortals are so lucky – most dishes are eaten alive.

Hell's Kitchen is the largest of the banqueting halls of the Oblurotts. Thousands of demons clamour for scraps from its tables, while the elite of the House gather to feast in its halls. Beneath the castle are cellars and pantries that scream and weep. The cooks of Hell's Kitchen are powerful slavers and alchemists, who equal the Astyanath in the creation of pain but exceed them in the creation of flavour.

The master of Hell's Kitchen and chef extraordinaire to the Lords of House Oblurott is Cusinash the Imp.

Adventures

The Third Circle is where the politics and wars of Hell really begin. Two of the three Houses are infamously secretive; all three are militarily powerful. Spies are in high demand here.

- ⚔ Mortal characters could be outlaws of the water margin here, raiding passing demon barges and escaping into the backwaters of the canal network.
- ⚔ Similarly, a barge containing slaves and souls could be hijacked (or the cargo could break free) and the crew have to find their way to safety.
- ⚔ Characters belonging to Houses Haimon, Glabretch or Oblurott will likely begin here on the Third Circle, and be given tasks related to their Houses.

THE FOURTH

CIRCLE - TOIL

The Fourth is perhaps the part of Hell that most closely resembles mortal imaginings; volcano-light illuminating millions of souls in toil and torment.

The mountains of Toil resemble congealed things; the vomit of rising magma or the slag-heap of creation. They are not as steep nor as high as the mountains of the Second Circle, which are like great razor-blades of granite. The mountains of Toil are squat, ugly things without grandeur, like black hills of soot matted with sweat and tears.

What the Fourth does have is resources. Iliaster is the lifeblood of the Infernum, but iron, copper, lead, oil and coal are its bones and its food. The war effort needs supplies, the cities and estates of Lower Hell need their luxuries, the torture palaces and the factories need their raw materials and tools. The Fourth exists in partnership with the Sixth Circle – the materials mined in the mountains of Toil are carried down the Iron Road to the factories of the Sixth.

Like hungry worms, the demons have bored deep into the mountains of Toil from both above and below. There are titanic deposits of every metal and mineral in the mountains. Thousands of slaves toil in the mines, side-by-side with indentured demons and stream-powered digging machines. The Fourth consumes all the slaves the other circles can send it and still needs more. There is always work to be done here.

The Fourth is seen as a dumping ground for those demons without the ruthlessness and ambition needed to thrive in the lower Circles. It is also used as a prison for demons too weak or too dangerous to be bound into weapons.

Terrain features

This is the chain of iron. This is the furnace for souls.

Centuries of mining have turned the Fourth Circle into a maze of abandoned mineshafts, gaping holes, canyons and slag-heaps.

Mines

Sometimes, the mines break through into other places. The demons investigate and choose whether to redirect the mine, collapse it or just seal it up and sacrifice the souls within to things from the other side.

The mines of the Fourth extend deep underground – so deep, in fact, that many reach outside the range of the clocks of Hell. A demon could descend into the mine and wait there for a day while a week or longer passes outside. In the Zethu-controlled mines, cunning iliaster-powered devices are used to extend the effects of the clocks down; in other mines, the demons do not care if a soul is trapped in a long moment for aeons.

The factories of the Sixth demand vast amounts of raw materials. The mines can never be shut down, not even for vital repairs or refitting. Crude picks are used beside steam drills and diamond-hard claws; labour spawn drag carts originally designed for engine-driven railways. There are souls and mortal slaves down in the dark who have never seen any sunlight, not even the bloody glow of the Morningstar. Their world is illuminated only by glimmering soulwick lamps and the flames of magma.

Crushing Stones (CR 2)

In the forests of the mortal world, one skilled in survival can find north by looking for moss on one side of tree-trunks. In Hell, a similar trick can be done involving rocks and gore.

Even the rocks are filled with venom on the Circle of Toil. Crushing stones are huge boulders that deliberately fall on or roll towards living creatures. The rocks sense vibrations and noise. A creature must make a Move Silently check at DC 20 when within 30 feet of a crushing rock. If this check is failed, the rock lunges towards him. The rock must make an attack roll with an attack bonus of +4; if this attack is successful, the rock deals 2d6 points of damage. A rock keeps attacking until the creature moves out of range. A crushing stone cannot be easily destroyed (hardness 10, 50 hit points, AC 5).

Fell Oil (CR 2, SR 8)

The Zethu alchemists are the greatest consumers of fell oil, and have bred biomechanical derricks that feed like vampires on the ground.

Another product of demon industry, fell oil wells up from the ground of the Infernum. It can be processed and used as fuel, but more often it is a danger. Fell oil attempts to flow into the mouths and noses of those it encounters, and from there moves to flood the lungs and bloodstreams. It is harmless unless touched, but a character exposed to fell oil will begin to drown. Each round, the character must actively scrape the oil

back off his skin, which requires a move action. A character must make a Concentration check (DC 10) to do this in combat. If the character fails to spend an action keeping the oil from reaching his mouth and nose, he begins to drown.

The oil can only be removed with fire, which sets it alight. A character covered in burning oil takes 1d6 points of fire damage each round until the oil is removed, which takes an attack action. A character that has scraped the oil from its body may spend a round retching and nauseated to expel the remaining oil from its lungs and stomach.

Leaden Zones

The Ironfont tribe of mortals use leaden zones as traps to catch demons.

In a leaden zone, the weight of metal and stone and sin drags creatures down to their knees. The more corrupt the creature is, the more effect the zone has. The borders of a leaden zone can be noticed by distortions in the air around it. Leaden zones extend for around two hundred feet into the air.

With a leaden zone, a character must make a Strength check each round to move. A character can take a second move action to attempt to move again if the first attempt fails. The DC for the Strength check is $10 + 2 \times$ the character's Corruption score.

The leaden zones are believed to be the product of souls trapped deep beneath the earth. Reduced to nothing but shreds of plasm, they permeate the rocks and stones and tap into the very spiritual gravity of the land.

Bloodfonts (SR 8)

In truth, the blood harvested in these places is condensed plasm, which collects like dew on the mountainsides and filters down into the rocks beneath. Bloodfont derricks resemble oil wells, but gush red gore instead of black gold. The thin plasm found in bloodfonts must be refined and enriched before it is of use.

Special Rules

A character exposed to the air and soil of the Fourth Circle for a full day suffers SR4 Corruption. The mines are even more foul, with the SR climbing to SR8 in the depths.

Fatigue and exhaustion work differently on the Circle of Toil. A character can choose to take 1d4 points

of temporary Wisdom or Charisma damage instead of becoming fatigued or exhausted. Creatures on the Fourth can work until they drive themselves mad.

Notable Locations

Up until recently, the Fourth Circle was occupied equally by all the Houses. The mines were too dangerous and prone to collapse to be valid targets; a demon who attacked a mine would often end up conquering nothing but a pile of rubble. The wars were fought on the Fifth Circle instead, although there were of course plenty of demons willing to destroy their enemies' holdings out of spite alone.

The revolt of the City of Dis and the subsequent upheavals within House Zethu have destroyed this unofficial truce. The Unveilers have had to greatly expand their holdings on the Fourth just to capture enough souls to feed their demons. Zethu has taken territory from Houses Oblurott, Astyanath, Haimon and Carthenay, and threatens the borders of the Sturrach mines.

Moloch

Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgement! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!

Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!

Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovahs! Moloch whose factories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch whose smokestacks and antennae crown the cities!"

—from 'Howl' by Allen Ginsberg

The city of Moloch is named the Maw by the Early tribes, for it is the all-consuming mouth of the Middle Hells. Above Moloch, there exists a slim hope that a captured tribesman might escape his demon jailers and survive. Once a mortal enters Moloch, however, his doom is certain.

Physically, the city is situated in a great valley beneath overhanging mountains. Bridges over the Acheron cross into Moloch, while the canal network connects to the city's lower docks and sewers. Moloch is the heart of industry on the Fourth; its great factories and

foundries churn out the common tools and machines needed by the miners and torturers. The craftsmen of Moloch are notoriously crude and simplistic; the city is a byword for shoddy metalwork. Still, with a virtually limitless supply of labour and raw materials, Moloch makes up for its lack of quality with quantity. A 'Moloch Treasure' is an item like a suit of armour or engine that has a soul accidentally forged into it – the factories do not care about safety of the damned workers. There are always more workers where the last lot came from.

Moloch is technically an independent city. For centuries, it was ruled by unaligned demons who played the Houses against each other ever since breaking free of Sturrach rule at the end of the Age of the Houses. It was a crude, violent city for crude, violent demons. Now, Moloch is surrounded on three sides by the forces of House Zethu. The Unveilers have not taken possession of the city, not yet; but the crude city of Moloch now has entertainments more suited to the refined palate of the Seventh Circle, and Zethu advisors and specialists are everywhere.

The city hides a secret – the rulers of Moloch bargained with some branches of the mortal tribe of the Branded, exchanging supplies and weapons for the souls of dying Branded. Should this secret trade be revealed, the ruling demons would be disgraced for trading instead of conquering the mortals, giving Zethu an excuse to completely conquer the city.

Iron Road

'March! March, you scum! No rest 'til the Sixth!'

The great Iron Road leads from the Fourth Circle to the Sixth, carrying the metals and raw materials mined in the Circle of Toil to the factories of industry. There are innumerable highways and caravan routes across the bloody fields of the Fifth, which are all collectively referred to as the Iron Road. The original road, though, runs from the mouth of the Underway to the city of Dis.

The Underway is a great labyrinth of tunnels and catacombs made up of interconnected mineshafts. Creatures who fear the light of the Morningstar use the Underway to reach the surface of the Fourth by night. It is also used for travel by creatures who do not wish to scale the slag piles and mountains. The largest branch of the Underway goes from beneath Moloch to the head of the Iron Road.

The Toil end of the Iron Road is heavily fortified, but travellers on the road suffer regular attacks while on

The Minotaur

The railway of the Minotaur runs through the Underway, but branches off before it reaches the old Iron Road. The demons who control the Minotaur are hated by those who keep the Iron Road, as the swift Minotaur is the threat to the valuable tolls they levy. Therefore, the railway cannot follow the easy route of the old Iron Road, but must instead weave through the labyrinthine Underway before climbing out of the darkness and going along precarious mountain slopes to reach the Fifth.

the Fifth.

The River Phlegton (Burning Iron)

Phlegton rises in the Valley of Fire and threads its way through the mountains until it reaches the great Coldface Escarpment and the dam built there by House Carthenay in ages past. There, the heat of the molten metal is leached from Phlegton and channelled to the Lethe furnaces lower down the Circle. The sullen dregs of the River of Burning Iron continue on, almost coming to a complete halt in places.

Sometimes, raiders from the iron mines elsewhere in the Fourth Circle block the river with landslides and makeshift dams. Phlegton is a free source of raw materials for the factories of the Sixth, so blocking the river instantly sends the price of the ingots shipped across the Iron Road shooting up. House Carthenay is notorious for this sort of economic piracy.

Phlegton flows back underground before exiting the Fourth Circle – the banks of its channel and its bed were laden with lumps of metal, so House Carthenay arranged for a mine to be dug underneath the river, to drain it away underground and leave its old bed ripe for exploitation. The unfortunate slaves who dug the mine and were drowned in boiling metal are still trapped down there in the hot dark.

The River Lethe (Forgetfulness)

The strangest of the rivers of Hell, Lethe flows from a circular lake high in the mountains. A haze of fumes surrounds the lake, rolling in lazy folds down the slopes. The fumes bring relief from pain and the welcome bliss of oblivion, so the mountain is crowded

with runaway damned souls. Masked demons go in and drag the souls out of this easeful mist.

A creature who drinks the waters of the Lethe or breathes in its mists has his memory partially erased. The character must make a Will save (DC 30) or be stunned for 2d6 rounds. He also suffers 1d6 points of temporary Intelligence damage. Full immersion in the Lethe washes away all identity in an instant. The character must make a Will save (DC 30 each round) or lose all memories. The character suffers 3d6 points of temporary Intelligence damage and loses all ranks in Intelligence-based skills.

Furthermore, the environs of the river are SR8.

The Lethe pours out of the lake down the waterfall called Regret and flows out into the Pit. Once, the Lethe coiled along the circles of Hell, all the way down to the Malebolge. Today, the course of the Lethe is a dry valley. Great dams block and contain the Lethe-waters in the valley below the lake, creating a huge inland Sea of Lethe. Furnaces and heat-engines boil the waters of the sea, while great chimneys channel the vapours off to the centre of the Pit, where the updrafts from the Morningstar carry it up to the Lethe Clouds.

The whole complex is controlled by House Carthenay, but the profit-conscious demons have no patience for the vast expense of fuelling and maintaining the dams and furnaces. The Lethe Engines have fallen into disrepair – the dams leak, the clouds are much thinner than they once were and many of the furnaces are now dark and cold, while the supplies of coal, oil and iliaster than once fired them are diverted to Hoarder factories and torture palaces elsewhere in the Pit. House Lictat is rumoured to be planning a take-over of the facility to cement its place among the Houses.

Ironfont Caverns

The Ironfont have a great machine that grinds demons into a thin gruel that can be consumed by mortals. It tastes foul and is quite corrupt, but the Ironfontsmen are already on the dark spiral down to irredeemable taint.

The Phlegton's heat is drained by the Coldface Escarpment and channelled to the Lethe Furnaces. From there, great clouds of vapour billow out. In one region near the Phlegton, these fumes wash over a mountain. Deep beneath this mountain are the Ironfont Caverns. Here, the Early tribe of the Ironfont have their refuge. The Lethe Clouds that wash over

their mountain ensure that anyone who discovers the hidden entrance to the caverns quickly forgets it. The Ironfontsmen wear masks to preserve their minds when the clouds roll in.

A tributary of the Phlegton flows through the cavern. The mortals have set up stolen forges and mining equipment to tap this metal and make it into weapons. They trade with the other mortal tribes by sending small, daring skiffs across the canals of the Third or by freeing slaves from the mines and supplying them with gear in exchange for services and food. The Ironfont farm fungi and albino spawn by the light of the burning river, but still lack food.

Estates of the Zethu

Where is your Veil now? You cling naked to the black hills, your secrets exposed and your power broken. The Zethu are but the first to fall to the new order of Hell!

The Zethu estates are in chaos. While most of the House's holdings are still on the Sixth Circle in their ancestral halls, they have moved their leaders and most important sorcerers and artificers to their meagre but secure mines on the Fourth. The retreat of the Zethu during the upheaval of the Free Cities was nothing short of a rout – a disgrace for a House that has always been one of the most dangerous of the Nine.

Since their arrival on the Fourth, the Zethu have been industrious. New towers have been raised to the skies, crackling with electricity. New spawning pits have been dug and filled with rich acids. Biomechanical servitors crawl out of black cocoons, while demon sorcerers built great ritual temples and summoning circles. Great living hellcannons and siege tanks crawl around the mountains, securing every approach.

There is no logic or design to the Zethu estates. Demon Lords and master sorcerers came in a bedraggled crowd to the Fourth Circle and made their homes in the nearest convenient fortresses and

mines. Demons who once dwelt in vast black citadels that rang with screams of pain and cries of inhuman pleasure are now crammed into ugly, dull mountain hovels. Machinery that was once stored in great hidden vaults now lies scattered around the slopes, exposed to wind and rain.

The Zethu have thrown up huge warding spells around their estates to give them some defences as they race to build more solid walls. These wardings keep back demons, but are no barrier to mortal raiders and damned souls, so the Zethu suffer greatly from predation and thievery. House Haimon looks covetously at its traditional rival, and certainly the Haimon legions could sweep away a weakened House Zethu if the Unveilers continue to rely on sorcery to defend themselves.



Fortresses and Strongholds

The Fourth has traditionally been relatively undefended, as the wars were confined to the Third and Fifth Circles. The natural defences of the Fourth – its steep mountains and treacherous terrain – blocked casual raiders. Furthermore, there was relatively little in the Fourth worth raiding; there are no rich soulfields where damned souls land, nor were there enemy fortresses to besiege or foes to capture and hurl into the spawning pit. The Fourth was a blank spot on the maps of the House war-leaders.

Fortresses on the Fourth, therefore, are not designed to hold back armies. They are ritual structures, built to block sorcerous attacks. The other common trait of Fourth Circle fortresses is the large number of death-traps built into every one. While large-scale invasions and raiding from other Circles are both rare here, demons condemned to overseeing a mine or torture field often break the tedium by trying to kill their neighbours. Making more gruesome and efficient

traps is an art form for many demons on the Fourth.

Barbican

The hounds of Barbican are lean and hungry. Their ironshod claws carry them swiftly over the blood marsh and road alike. Their howls are a challenge to any who would defy the Fortress of the Last Gate.

The Barbican fortress stands at the beginning of the old Iron Road. The Underway from Moloch rises from beneath the fortress and runs through it. The master of Barbican is charged with maintaining the integrity and safety of the Iron Road, so patrols of demons on riding spawn accompanied by hellhounds are regularly sent out to scour the Fifth for brigands and raiders.

A massive portcullis hangs above the Iron Road as a symbol of Barbican's power to block traffic along the road, but the true strength of the keep lies deep within it. Two massive iliaster-driven magical engines were installed by Zethu engineers in centuries past. Should these slumbering engines be activated, they would send a huge pulse of lethal hellfire down the Iron Road, burning it clear of any advancing armies or travellers. This capacity of Barbican has never been used and is kept secret, but the Lords of Barbican are known for arrogantly threatening rival nobles on the Fifth or Sixth Circles.

The current Lord of Barbican is an Oblurott deceiver named Gurool. Gurool considers the Zethu newcomers to the Fourth as invaders, and regularly torments and insults Zethu nobles that are technically far above it in station. What Gurool does not know is that the Zethu still recall the existence of the hellfire engines inside Barbican, and tolerate Gurool only until they can overthrow him and reclaim the fortress.

Drudge Castle

A typical small fortress of the Fourth, Drudge Castle is built into a worked-out mine. The network of tunnels and shafts beneath the keep is far more extensive than the building itself. The castle resembles a cross between a pyramid and a formal garden – it is purely designed to block sorcery and contains no living quarters or defensive redoubts.

The abmouth approach to Drudge Castle appears to be the easiest at first glance – all the others require an attacker to clamber over slag-heaps, but the abmouth road is broad and flat. However, the tunnels run beneath the road, so any traveller can be spotted and ambushed by attackers from the underground

passageways.

Drudge's main vulnerability is to aerial bombardment – the last time a Lord of Drudge Castle offended a more powerful demon, the wrathful hulk had its fiends blast Drudge's walls until they were broken, thus nullifying the castle's protective geometries. The Lord was then *summoned* into the hulk's presence and killed.

Adventures

The Fourth Circle has agents of all the noble Houses here, but is still very uncivilised and violent. Characters trying to spark a war between Houses or cut supply lines will find the Fourth Circle eminently suited to their aims.

- ⊗ Raiding House Zethu's new estates could be very profitable for any demon with an understanding of sorcery or technology. Stealing a spellbook, a biomechanical cocoon or some new weapon could make a demon's fortune.
- ⊗ The characters are hired to find the Ironfont and discover where the Branded faction called the Broken Chain have their hiding place. Ironfont-forged weapons have been seen in the hands of Chainers, so there must be some link between the two.
- ⊗ As feared, the Coldface Escarpment's furnaces break down and the Lethe Clouds begin to thin. What will happen to Hell when the souls who fall remember their past lives and Heaven can look down directly into the Pit? Can the characters navigate the ancient structure and repair it?

THE FIFTH CIRCLE – SLAUGHTER

Demons do not experience calm. They may be frantic things of twitching lust or fear. They may be mad calculating engines of blasphemous sorcery or patient webspinners preparing their aeon-spanning traps, but they are never calm and serene – except in the moment of the kill.

Except in the dance of slaughter, when the hot blood rains down and the demon exults, knowing that it is the stronger today.

It is never a good day to die in Hell, but it is always a good day to kill.

There is not a square inch of the Infernum that has not had blood or ichor spilled on it. There is nowhere that does not echo with the screams of the suffering damned. Pain and death are omnipresent in Hell.

For the Fifth Circle to be famed above all others for its carnage and brutality is a testament to the savage wars fought there. Even in the earliest days of the Infernum, it was used as a testing ground by the angels. Uncounted proto-demons died here as they failed to prove themselves suitable tools for the war on Heaven. Later, when the Houses took control of realms once ruled by the Dominions, the Fifth was again set aside as a battleground. The Seventh and Sixth Circles were the civilised heartlands of the Infernum, a place where assassinations and sorcerous assaults were permissible, but open warfare was not. The Fourth Circle and Upper Hell were too far from the strongholds of the lower Houses. The Fifth was just right for war.

And so they fight.

The Fifth Circle is littered with the blasted, rusting hulks of war machines and the skeletons of fallen mortals and spawn. The ground is rent with great scars and scorched by hellfire bursts. Black clouds of soot and hungry flocks of black crows hang over the battlefields.

Terrain features

This is the testing ground. This is the crucible.

The terrain of the Fifth blends into that of the Sixth – a long expanse of blasted earth that slopes from the mountains of Toil all the way down to the ruddy banks of the Styx. The damage inflicted by the wars has torn the soil away in many sections, letting lava well up from the walls of the Pit. In others, flows of ichor and plasm have turned the loose earth into a foetid bog.

The Fifth is also known as the Bloody Circle, for blood is everywhere here. It flows through the beds of dry rivers, and falls from the sky in gory sheets of rain. Every garment or exposed piece of skin is soon stained red. The stench of death is everywhere.

The Fifth is home to the thickest, wildest forests of Hell.

Lava Flows (CR 1 or 5+)

The Fifth Circle is wracked by volcanic eruptions and overflows. A lava flow (CR 1 if the characters

must cross it and do not have easy access to flight) inflicts 8d6 points of fire damage each round to any creature caught in it or touching it. Most lava flows are static, but eruptions are much more dangerous. Small eruptions (CR 5) begin with an earth tremor. Creatures within 100 feet of the eruption's centre must make a Reflex save or Balance check (DC 15) or fall prone. Lava then begins to well out of the centre, in a circular area that increases its radius by 1d4x10 feet each round. Furthermore, pieces of burning rock fall from the sky; a character within 1,000 feet of the eruption centre suffers 1d6 points of damage each round, half of which is fire damage.

The lava will flow downhill at a rate of fifteen feet per round if the ground is sloped.

Haunted Battlegrounds (SR4)

'That is where they burned me', says one.

'Here I fell, stabbed by many swords' whispers another.

A third is headless, and can only point.

A fourth writhes on the ground, denuded of all limbs, but it makes its indignity clear in its twitches.

Iliaster produced by the agonised labour and torment of a thousand souls is expended in a single flash of power on the battlefield. In a clash between demonic forces, the battle is often decided by who can channel the most iliaster into their mutations and weaponry; the more profligately the demon expends its stock of souls, the more likely it is to be victorious.

This squandered iliaster lingers on the battlefield. In some places, it seeps into the ruined bodies of mortal soldiers, into the discarded husks of demons, into the broken weapons and shards of armour that lie scattered in the mire. Ghosts arise – not damned souls, but mindless spectres of warfare. These ghosts re-fight the battles over and over, or identify every other creature as their enemy and fight with the cold tenacity of the damned.

Warghosts are described on page 206. A typical haunted battleground contains 2d6 warghosts.

Red Mist (CR 3, SR 7)

The light of the Morningstar shining through the atmosphere of the Fifth Circle illuminates the red mist in a bloody dawn. The Knights of the Harrowing know this sign and pray God to avert it each day.

The terrible red mist is an increasingly common sight in the Fifth Circle. It rises from spilled blood and ichor, so it is most commonly encountered during a

battle. The red mist warps the minds and bodies of those who inhale it, making them stronger and more dangerous, but also driving them into the throes of an unquenchable bloodlust.

A character who inhales red mist must make a Fortitude save (DC 18). If this saving throw is *failed*, the character gains the benefit of Rage for 3d6 + the character's newly improved Constitution modifier rounds (as per the first link in the Hulk chain). The character then makes a Will save (DC 20), and suffers a -6 penalty to his check if he failed the first Fortitude save. If the Will save is failed, the character must attack the nearest creature for as long as he is raging.

Houses Glabretch and Sturrach have both experimented with bottling red mist and using it on their own troops or those of the enemy.

Night-Oak Forests

The great forests of the Fifth are filled with great black trees called night-oaks. These trees are sentient and aware; they whisper to each other in the darkness with creaks and the sound of wind in the branches. They can shift their positions, moving the paths through the forest and guiding victims into its lightless heart.

Night-oaks hate demons just as much as they hunger for mortal blood. The armies of the Fifth have long ago learned to deal with the trees, blasting and burning the forests back rather than trust to the shifting paths.

Special Rules

The whole of the Fifth Circle is SR5. Anyone spending a full day out of a sheltered environment risks Corruption.

Killing is especially rewarded here. A character who slays a foe in combat receives a 5% bonus to the experience earned.

Notable Locations

The wars of the Fifth have destroyed many of the wonders of the Infernum. Fortresses of terrible beauty and grandeur were razed by rampaging armies. Mountains that once jutted out of the mire have been levelled to speed the passage of some long-dead army. Forests that thrived in the bloody ground have been destroyed or denuded so they cannot serve as cover in battle. All around it is the ruin of war.

Iron Road

The old Iron Road crosses the Fifth from the fortress

of Barbican to the city of Dis. To hold it above the clinging mud of the Circle, the Iron Road is suspended above the ground on a series of great arched bridges or iron islands. Raw materials from the mines on the Fourth are shipped along the road in spawn-drawn carts or great slave trains to the factories of the Sixth.

The Iron Road is the single most important artery of trade and commerce in the whole Pit. It is therefore targeted by every thief, warring House or bored mercenary band on the Fifth. Waystations and forts are located all along the road where travellers under attack can take refuge. Places like the Inn of Boiling Blood are the best places outside a Riethii party to pick up news and gossip.

By ancient tradition, travellers on the road are bound to keep the peace with each other – assault on fellow travellers is forbidden and a traveller must help others attacked by brigands along the way. This rule only applies to those on the road – step even an inch off the Iron Road and the rule does not apply to you. The patrols sent out from Dis and Barbican will generally only help those travellers who obey this ancient law.

That assumes, of course, that the patrols are not too busy killing each other. The two cities at the opposite ends of the Iron Road are violently opposed to each other, so an unofficial war has been raging between the two for control of the road and its valuable toll booths. Currently, both Barbican and Dis control roughly a third of the road each, with the remainder either unpatrolled or held by a consortium of innkeepers and independent demons whose fortresses straddle the Iron Road.

The term, 'Iron Road' is also informally applied to all commerce and traffic between the Fourth and Sixth. Outlaws who prey on this traffic are called Iron Raiders.

The River Lethe (Forgetfulness)

The Lethe once flowed through the Fifth, where it was known as the Hospitallers' Stream – injured demons were once given Lethe-water to ease their pain, and various Houses of Healing and dissection are located along the course of the river. The greatest of these Houses is the Riethii-controlled Bower of Repose. Now, of course, the Lethe is dammed up in the Fourth Circle and no longer flows down to the Fifth.

The valley of the Lethe is filled with blood. Some strange property left by the magical waters that once flowed here has passed onto the blood, for the blood here *remembers*. Creatures made of scabs and gore

crawl out of the river and stagger for a few miles before they clot and collapse. These bloody echoes of the dead are useful divination tools for demons. To interrogate a foe, simply obtain a few drops of his ichor and throw it into the Lethe-bed. A bloody mockery of the foe will rise out of the slime. This thing, called a scabshell, has only a fraction of the original's wit or memories, but it is pathetically willing to trade what it knows for a few bowls of blood once it leaves the river and begins to dry out.

The River Phlegton (Burning Iron)

By the time the Phlegton reaches the Fifth, all its heat has been drained out by the industries of the Fourth. It flows slowly and painfully. Great sheets of iron form on its surface, solid enough for an army to march on. The Phlegton's meandering course and sheer width means that it acts as a natural barrier between different holdings. Therefore, knowing the difference between when the iron sheets can be trusted to support an army and when they are too thin and fragile to hold is the difference between a successful invasion and a disaster. Whenever the Phlegton is especially sluggish, war breaks out all along its length.

The River Acheron (Foul Waters)

Having slipped into the tunnels beneath the Fourth, the Acheron erupts back onto the surface of the Fifth Circle at a hollow once called Scar, but now generally referred to as the Glabretch Gash. The foul House has managed to float great rafts of fungus and filth down along the river and out into the Scar delta. This gives House Glabretch a direct link between its old holdings on the Third and its new domain on the Fifth. The whole Scar is now filled with Glabretch fortresses and disease farms, and attempts are underway to grow the moliata here.

The Glabretch expansion pushes against Riethii holdings on the Fifth.

The Acheron is also used as a dumping ground for waste, such as used ammunition, destroyed vehicles and corpses. The lower swamps may be fouled with a rich mix of industrial chemicals, military poisons, rotting carcasses and whatever unthinkable things float down from the Glabretch territory, but the swamps are still full of artificer scavengers and Haimon corpse-gatherers.

The River Styx (Mournful Blood)

The red Styx rises in the Fifth, although it does not attain its full majesty until deep into the Sixth. The Styx flows red with blood and black with scabs and shadows in other places. It flows in strange bursts, as if some great heart buried deep beneath the ground were pumping the river down the vein-banks.

The Upper Styx is one of the most dangerous rivers in Hell; hordes of strange, vicious creatures dwell on its banks. However, as the Styx flows through important regions like the industries of the Sixth and the gardens of the Seventh, these vermin cannot be allowed to spread to the lower river where they would trouble the heart of Infernal civilisation. Thousands of demons are employed fighting an endless war against these monsters, holding them here in the Fifth.

The Styx is SR8 throughout, although isolated coves and streamlets can rise as high as SR12.

The Minotaur

The Minotaur's route through the Fifth is a difficult one. As it had to avoid the Iron Road, the Minotaur winds its way down through the Circle, crossing and recrossing the rivers again and again. It dives into bloody swamps and arcs over battlegrounds on towering stone bridges. The Minotaur is forced to run very close to the unruly city of Golgotha, which makes the backers of the great train project very nervous indeed.

Another branch of the Minotaur runs into the Carthenay and Zethu estates on the Fifth. The trains that run on this branch are heavily armed and armoured; essentially, each is a mobile fortress that can be rushed to anywhere along the estate borders to repel attackers.

Challenge Fields

Now in the fourth field, Baron Suvarsh of the Astyanath and... oh, I'm too slow. Now parading the corpse of his vanquished foe in the fourth field, Baron Suvarsh...

The Challenge Fields are a series of nine arenas where demonic duels can be fought. Unlike the grand and ornate duelling grounds of the Seventh, these arenas are simple, brutish places where disagreements can be resolved in a crude, bone-smashing but fair fashion. The fields are overseen by the Priests of the Morningstar, who are avowedly neutral and care

nothing for the disputants. The Challenge Fields are especially favoured for duels that must be conducted with a judge present, but also are supposed to be kept out of sight of the Houses – this is especially common in duels between members of Houses like Riethii or Astyanath. A young Riethii incubus, who has been bred all his life to be as beautiful and desirable as possible, is insulted by a Glabretch cur. The incubus wants to kill the cur in a duel, but his elders in House Riethii order him not to, as his perfect face is a far more important possession of the House than his pride. Prevented from fighting the duel in the crowded arenas of the Seventh, he slips off to the Challenge Fields to fight.

A fight in the Challenge Fields costs 20 crowns to hire the arena.

Black Pit of Fellmar

All the demons of the Free Cities claim to be out of Fellmar, to deny any links to the hated Houses.

The Black Pit is a deep hole on the shores of the Acheron. According to demonic tradition, it was dug by a great hellworm that escaped from the Zethu beast-pits. The Black Pit is filled with the chemicals and acids used in the Spawning Pits. A warren of smaller tunnels and passages leads down into the Pit. Demons are often thrown into the pit, where they dissolve into unaligned demons. The Black Pit is one of the few spawning pits outside the House estates and the Free Cities, so it is one of the few places where new unaligned demons may be created. The Pit is also a perfect way to dispose of prisoners and unwanted slaves.

Hellworms infest the area around the pit. These are said to be the offspring of the original worm who made the pit. Demons sometimes capture and ride these beasts.

Golgotha

The angel's shadow hangs over the Killer's Market. Demons who want to buy the deaths of hundreds still shudder when it passes over them. The few who have been chosen to be Uriel's watchmen and guards shudder too, for they do not know why the angel picked them to aid it.

Like Minos, Golgotha is not held by any of the Houses, but neither is it part of the Free City heresy. Golgotha is a lawless, violent place that is known as the mercenary capital of the Infernum. Most of the city consists of camps and shanties where the unhired

mercenaries and their slaves dwell. In the heart of the city is the great marketplace, the Killer's Market, where mercenary commanders and brokers haggle with customers from the Houses. Golgotha is also a market for weapons of all sorts, especially new and unusual ones.

Golgotha has torture palaces, but very few damned souls to process in them. The city groans under a terrible lack of iliaster. Raids on slave trains on the Minotaur or the Iron road are an almost daily necessity and Dissolute demons throng the alleys of Golgotha. Brawls and murders over scraps of soul that would hardly be noticed in wealthier areas are common in Golgotha.

The lawless city has a protector, however – an angel calling itself Uriel watches over the city. Whether this cryptic guardian is truly the archangel of that name or if it is just a mad angel is unknown. Uriel roosts in a clocktower overlooking the Killer's Market. Anyone who breaks his law suffers Uriel's wrath, but no demon knows what moral code Uriel is hewing too.

Free City of Mayhem

In some traditions, there are countless hells, each with a different torment. This is the Hell of Blowing Things Up.

The City of Mayhem was once referred to as the Port of Dis – not because Mayhem is located on the Sunless Sea or any of its rivers, but because all the new lethal innovations of Dis poured out of Mayhem. It was essentially a Zethu fortress that had expanded greatly beyond its walls and was to the arms trade what Golgotha is to mercenaries. Demons from every House visited Mayhem to supply their armies.

When Dis declared itself Free, Mayhem was the first to follow – and the first to turn its weapons on the Houses. Nearby Zethu holdings were blasted into nothingness by artillery strikes from within Mayhem. The city has been besieged several times since that initial strike, but no attacker has been able to overcome Mayhem's terrible arsenal.

The forces of the Free City are engaged in a bitter war with House Sturrach and a dozen unaligned warlords and mercenary groups for control of the territory along the Iron Road, as well as three soulfields. Unbranded souls are a rare commodity on the Fifth, so these fields are very valuable holdings. The patchwork army of Mayhem is exceptionally well equipped, but lacks experience. Most of its victories have come through buying out rival mercenaries instead of actually

defeating them in battle.

The Lord of Mayhem is an artificer by the name of Cylix. It is a genius at the art of inventing death machines. Cylix began its life as a member of House Zethu, but was captured and forcibly Covenanted by the Carthenay. It only escaped this bondage by fleeing into a Free City. Cylix is a fervent believer in the cause of the broken Covenant and has launched numerous attacks using long-range gauntflyers or even experimental fiend-bonded missiles on Carthenay fortresses.

Knights of the Harrowing

'Your God has no power here, mortal.'

'Perhaps, but my sword remains bright and sharp, o fiend.'

From the shores of the Styx clockwise of Jelac's Tower to the ruins of New Perdition, and abmouth from the Lictat estates to Broken Blade Marsh, the land is not under the rule of the Infernum or any of its Houses. Unthinkable, here in the very heart of Hell, a group of mortals raises their banner in defiance of the hellkin. This is the land of the Knights of the Harrowing – until the Free Cities, these were the greatest threat in the Pit to the security of the Infernum.

At the centre of the Harrower's domain is their citadel, a great crusader's castle atop a huge spur of rock that was torn from the mortal world during a hellgout. The citadel has been reinforced again and again, wrapped in every warding and protective sorcery the knights could manage, and rebuilt until it is hardly recognisable. The whole mountain beneath it has been excavated into a labyrinth of storage vaults and shelters; the whole order could take refuge here if necessary.

Beyond the citadel, the territory of the knights contains dozens of hidden refuges and smaller fortresses. The knights work in a similar fashion to the Early tribes of the upper circles, using lots of small hiding places and shelters from corruption. The knights are careful to ensure that those exposed to the hellish environment are purified to prevent further corruption. The refuges also hide farms and greenhouses that supply the food for the knights; they have learned to use iliaster as the Oblurott have to make plants thrive in Hell, although the crops of the Harrowers are far healthier than the vile fruits of the Gluttonous ones.

The order of the Harrowers includes mortals, angels and souls. All are treated equally within the order, so long as they hold to their vows. It is this unity that

has allowed the Harrowers to survive in the face of constant attacks from demonic forces, primarily those of House Sturrach. Knights also serve as mercenaries – originally, this was just a ruse to obtain supplies in Golgotha, but the usefulness of well-trained, disciplined, healthy mortal mercenaries means that this work has become a profitable sideline for the knights.

Estates of House Sturrach

The march of jackboots echoes over the plain. Barbed-wire fences and guard towers extend to the horizon. Klaxons mark the end of one drill and the beginning of another, over and over. It is like a war is coiled and ready here, needing only a spark.

On entering the lands of House Sturrach, the first thing that strikes the visitor is the sheer number of trophies from all over the Infernum. There is a tree from the Wood of Suicides on the Seventh; there is a stone torn from the living rock of the Second; there a foe cast in Phlegton's burning metal on the Fourth. Here are spawn-skulls and demon sigils from all over the Infernum. Once, House Sturrach ruled almost the entire Pit.

The second thing that the visitor perceives is the losses suffered by House Sturrach. There are ancient war machines that no longer function for lack of iliaster. There are statues and memorials to fallen demons who are far larger and more powerful than any spawned from their ruin. House Sturrach's armies are still incomparably mighty, but the House is so starved of iliaster that every expense must be considered carefully. House Sturrach feels like a nation under rationing and martial law.

The third thing is the palpable sense of fury and hate. House Sturrach has not forgotten its glories, nor its defeats. It will retake all that it has lost and grind its foes beneath the iron soles of the hulks. 'We will bury you' mutter the hosts of House Sturrach.

Efficiency has become the Sturrach watchword. The damned are corralled in concentration camps, crammed into tiny wire cages before being processed. Every scrap of iliaster or metal is reused. Even the rages of the hulks are put to productive use – damned souls are fitted with specially reinforced extraction rigs and thrown into a dungeon with a rampaging hulk.

This efficiency extends to the defensive fortresses. In all the other Houses, a demon of sufficient wealth and ambition can build its home wherever it pleases,

claiming the land and soulfields around it and carving out its own domain. House Sturrach does not have the luxury of such chaos; its fortresses are carefully placed as defensive bulwarks, and demons have to earn the right to rule a fortress by participating in military games or winning great victories on the battlefield. Law and discipline within the Sturrach territories is enforced by an order of demons called the Bane Watch, who ruthlessly destroy any Sturrach demon who dares defy its commanders.

Fortresses and Strongholds

The Fifth's fortresses tend to be temporary structures – true, they are built of soulstone and iron by the labour of tens of thousands of slaves and designed to last for centuries, but few fortresses can withstand the constant warfare and sieges endemic to the Fifth. The few strongholds that still endure are legends in stone.

Blackstone Keep

The fires of Hell burn both hot and cold.

Blackstone Keep was once the Haimon bastion against Sturrach aggression. The keep stands at the mouth of a pass leading into the Fourth Circle and the Haimon estates. The fortress was built to house an army of the dead, who would block any aggression from the Fifth.

The fiend Lukas led the advance guard of House Sturrach in the great war. It was a master of hellfire, a prodigy in the art of destruction. When faced with the obstacle of the keep, Lukas mustered its fiends and blasted the fortress with the single largest hellfire detonation ever seen in the Infernum. For a moment, the blast was brighter than the Morningstar.

The keep survived the blast. The demons inside were reduced to complete Dissolution and ash as the hellfire incinerated both body and spirit in an instant.

The legions of the dead, however, were transformed by the vast explosion. The souls were set alight and continue to burn to this day. The Blackstone Keep is still held by their souls. They obey whoever conquers the keep, but their eyes burn with hatred for demons.

Outremer

The refuge of the Knights of the Harrowing is called Outremer, after a Christian kingdom that was surrounded by enemies. Outremer stands atop a mountain dragged from the mortal realm. The tunnels below the mountain were filled with supplies when the hellgout struck, allowing the knights to survive within Outremer for months while the demon armies dashed themselves to pieces on the castle's impenetrable walls.

Outremer is a symbol of human insolence and rebellion to the demons. The House that destroys the Harrowers will win great renown within the Infernum.

Sturrach's Hold

The central fortress of the Sturrach estates is the single largest fortification in the Pit. It is a massive black tower that juts from a lake of lava. Nine bridges of obsidian and basalt cross the lake to the central isle and the tower. These bridges are the only way to reach the tower; battalions of fiends and warding spells protect Sturrach's Hold from aerial assault.

The Hold dates back to before the foundation of the Infernum; its foundations were dug by angels, but its topmost towers were raised by demons. Despite the vastness of the Hold, it cannot contain all the armies of House Sturrach, so only the greatest warriors, generals, spies and sorcerers are permitted to reside in the Hold. Here, away from the spies of the Malebolge, the House holds its war-councils and plots its future course. The Hold itself is a weapon; sorceries can be channelled through its iron girders and obsidian



walls. Any *swift dispatch of the agent* spells cast within its walls can be targeted on any location within line-of-sight of the fortress' roof.

Adventures

The Fifth Circle is the obvious place for military conflicts and clashes. Characters can get involved in these with the Mass Combat rules in *Book of the Conqueror*, or do daring behind-enemy-lines actions, or try to avert or start wars.

- ⊗ With individual demons having so much power, the loss of a single powerful hellkin can turn a battle. The characters are hired to sneak into a demon's fortress and poison it, so that it will die at a critical moment in a battle.
- ⊗ House Sturrach is currently at war with the Free Cities, House Oblurott and the Knights of the Harrowing. With three armies in the field, there is endless opportunity for political machinations between the three warlords; the characters could try to convince one of the demon commanders that its estates are being threatened back home.
- ⊗ The characters are travelling through Golgotha when Uriel confronts them and demands they solve a crime. Refusing an insane angel of unknown but considerable power is never a wise choice, so it is off to become demon detectives.

THE SIXTH CIRCLE - INDUSTRY

All of Hell was a machine to breed an army, but now it lacks a captain and a war. All of Hell is a machine for converting souls into meat for the demons. All of Hell will devour itself, the snake eating its own tail.

The Sixth Circle is a cacophony of crashing metal and groaning damned slaves. The factories work night and day, churning out weapons and armour for the armies, as well as luxuries for the decadent demons of the lower Circles and the cities. Building materials are also made here; Hell is constantly under construction, with new cities and new fortresses being raised to replace those destroyed in war. There are great chemical works whose exhalations scar the eyes and lungs, producing the alchemical compounds using in hellcannons and spawning pits.

All this industry, however, is as nothing compared to the true purpose of the Sixth Circle – pain.

It is here that the demons produce almost all the iliaster extracted in the Infernum. In other words, more pain is suffered here in a day than the mind can conceive. In the great torture-palaces, millions of souls are grist for the hellish mill. Blind machines guided by demon cunning do horrible, unthinkable things to damned souls. Their screams rise up to the choking black clouds and their energy runs out as iliaster.

If it were just the demons who fed on this bounty, then perhaps the Sixth could cope with the demand. However, iliaster is needed for far more than just slaking the hunger of some lowly imp. Agony and Strain are both produced in great amounts here, both through direct torture or through wasteful alchemical transmutations. Iliaster is used in the factories of the Circle, to power machines or infused into hellish metals to produce hellish steel and other components.

This is the Infernum at its most naked – a great machine of black iron that chews up souls and blindly shits out more of itself, then wonders why it starves.

Terrain features

It is hard to discern the original terrain of the Sixth. It seems that every inch of the land is covered in rusting metal plates, in abandoned factories or bloated industrial complexes whose only purpose is to extend themselves. In the few regions not consumed by industry, the terrain of the Sixth resembles that of the Fifth – scorched plains of volcanic earth broken by lava-filled rifts and jutting deposits of obsidian.

Industrial Waste (SR 8)

Barrels of explosive waste are scattered throughout the Sixth Circle, making firefights very hazardous.

The factories of the Sixth pump out billions of gallons of waste every year. There are always more raw materials and more slaves, so there is no impetus to be efficient. Much of this waste is poured into the rivers Styx and Acheron, or pumped into the tunnels of Underhell. The rest is... creatively disposed of. Industrial waste is a weapon like any other; demons have been known to build underground pipelines and spray waste into the foundations of rival factories.

One notable form of waste is that of shredded souls. A damned soul heals over time, so long as the injuries inflicted on it are not too dire. However, should a soul be torn apart completely, it is shredded and will never heal. These fragments of spirit are of no use to the demons and are dumped. Beggar-demons

comb the shredded piles, looking for souls that were wrongly disposed of and can be nursed back to health and then re-tortured. The piles are horrible sights, as thousands of ephemeral fragments of souls thrash mindlessly, looking for the other parts of themselves that lie somewhere in the refuse.

Ragbodies (CR 9)

These horrors arise from the ruin of souls. Sometimes, a soul is discarded when it still has a spark of selfhood within it. However, the soul is so traumatised it can not longer yield iliaster. These ruined souls form bodies for themselves out of scrap metal, grease and industrial waste and roam the dumping grounds of the Sixth, mindlessly attacking anything they encounter (see page 199 for more details).

Lava Flows

Lava flows, like those encountered on the Fifth, are common on the Industrial Circle. The inventive demons sometimes tap the heat of the lava, as is done on the Coldface Escarpment on the Fourth.

Rust Lakes (CR 2)

One of the curious phenomena of the Industrial Circle, rust lakes are usually blamed on Glabretchi biological warfare (but what is not blamed on House Glabretch?). A rust lake is a wide area of metal that has turned to a dangerous form of rust, but still looks intact and bright – until it is touched. The rust lake then dissolves into a corrosive dust. This dust deals 1d6 points of acid damage each round to anything touching it – and this attack ignores the hardness and protective qualities of metals. The dust clings to metals, but not to flesh. It can be scraped off as long as the victim is not wearing metal armour.

Poison Rains (CR 5)

Chimneys belch black smoke into the skies of the Sixth; on some days, the passage of the Morningstar through these clouds actually sets the sky on fire. On other days, the rain falling through the cloud picks up poisons thick with mercury and lead and malice. Creatures exposed to this rain must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or take 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage. Every ten minutes, another Fortitude save is required. To protect themselves from these rains, demons wear sealed suits or travel by underground tunnels during rainstorms.

Special Rules

The whole of the Sixth Circle is SR6.

If a creature with a Corruption less than 10 is trying to sleep on the Sixth, he must be in a sound-proofed room or make a Concentration check (DC 15). If this check is failed, he cannot sleep that night due to the sound of screaming.

Torture

The Sixth's signature form of torture is the torture palace. A palace is a great factory designed to inflict as much pain as possible. It resembles a slaughter house more than anything else. Damned souls arrive in train-loads or slave gangs from the upper Circles and are sold to the demons running the palace. The souls are then fitted with extraction rigs that hang from the ceiling of the palace – in new facilities, the whole place is a massive rig and separate arrangements do not need to be made for each soul.

A conveyor belt then drags the souls through a tunnel of knives and spinning blades. Sounds and psychic impulses are used to enhance the experience, making it even more painful. As the souls are churned, sliced, scorched and torn, their pain produces iliaster. Once a soul has been processed, it falls off the conveyor belt onto a grid, leaving the rig behind it. This grid lets completely shredded souls fall through (to another conveyor belt which carries them off for disposal) while souls that still endure are dumped into vats of chemicals. These vats hasten the soul's regeneration, making it ready to be processed again as soon as possible.

The average soul sustains 4d6 points of damage and 1d6 points of Wisdom damage during processing. This equates to an average of 30 or so damage, enough to produce a point of iliaster. The soul will be healed again in a day, making it ready for reprocessing. Should the damage be too great, the soul is shredded and dumped.

Free Cities

The Sixth is the home of the Free City Heresy. While this heresy has spread to all the Circles of Hell above the Sixth, this is still the place that loyal demons associate with the Breaking of Oaths. The Free City heresy started in Dis and swiftly spread to a dozen other, smaller cities.

Mechanically, the Breaking of Oaths works as follows: if a creature spends a year and a day within a Free City, all his Covenants are broken. The character can leave the Free City if he wants, so long as he spends the majority of the year and a day in a Free

City. The character can move from city to city if he wishes; a character who spends three months in Dis, three months in Mayhem and another three months in Allsorrows would break his oaths, even if he was at large in the Infernum during the rest of the year.

All Covenants are broken, even the ones the character holds. A character can make new Covenants after breaking his oaths.

Breaking one's oaths is punishable by execution in House-controlled zones.

Notable Locations

The Sixth vies with the Garden of Unholy Delights for the title of 'most densely populated Circle'. Certainly, if all the damned souls are counted in this census, then the Sixth's population dwarfs that of the rest of the Infernum put together. Sections of the circle are so built up that the place feels like a giant Pit-girdling city, where demons scurry through canyons of steel and rust that echo with the sounds of pain and progress.

Cacaphractus

The infamous demonic resistance to actually dying has been expressed in a particularly unpleasant fashion here. It is well known that the machine city sometimes removes the brains and spinal columns of demons and replaces them with clockworks and brass rods to create mechanical spies and emissaries. In some cases, the removed ganglia do not die, but crawl off into the internal gearage of the city to live for a time like bizarre hanging gardens in the oily darkness.

This industrial plant is the single largest complex in the Sixth, rivalling Sturrach's Hold for sheer size. It was built by Astyanath itself, say the histories, before it became Lord of a House. The purpose of Cacaphractus is a mystery – the great machine is self-aware and is maintained by demon and damned servants whose brains have been replaced by clockwork parts spat out by the machine. Cacaphractus has been attacked many times, but its automated defences have repelled the invaders. The machine trades with the Houses for iliaster and raw material, exchanging devices of surpassing cunning and thinking machines such as the brazen heads. Cacaphractus was responsible for the creation of the screamer network used in the Sixth and below.

Up until the revolt, watching over the machine was a duty of House Zethu. The Unveilers had established a ring of defences and artillery pieces surrounding

Cacaphractus' site, and were ready to blast the living city should it attempt to expand beyond its established borders. The revolt of Dis means that Cacaphractus is currently unwatched and ungoverned. The artillery pieces are in the possession of the besieging House forces, but their ammunition is under the control of Dis.

See pages 197-199 for a description of Cacaphractus' servants.

Nethergore

The surgeons of Nethergore are bred in the palace's specially brewed and sterilised spawning pods. They wear pristine white gowns and move like needles do.

Another product of Astyanath and Zethu engineering, Nethergore is the largest and most advanced torture palace in Hell. It is the showcase for all the latest innovations in agony as well as being a fully functional place of torment. Nethergore is made of shining surgical steel, to distinguish itself from the black iron and bloodied stone of the other, lesser facilities. To maintain Nethergore's edge over the other palaces, the operators try to process only powerful souls – those who are notably more resilient, or more pure, or more corrupt.

Recently, Nethergore suffered one of the greatest thefts in Infernal history. Most of the palace's iliaster is converted into the wine of Agony, which needs far more power than common plasmic iliaster. Therefore, the iliaster produced is compressed in great vats before being transported to the Agony refinery. Forces unknown managed to burrow beneath one of these vats and made off with hundreds of thousands of crowns worth of iliaster. The rulers of Nethergore have managed to conceal this loss from their Astyanath masters and are working the souls twice as hard to make up for the missing iliaster.

Biomechanical Harvesting

It was here on the Sixth, in the besieged city of Dis, that the demons of House Zethu first created the biomechanicals, a race of engineered beings that partake of the qualities of demon, spawn and machine. These biomechanicals mature faster and require less iliaster than demons, but are more intelligent and skilled than mindless spawn. It was these beings that turned the tide against House Sturrach when the Bloody Ones threatened to take over the whole Pit.

Today, the biomechanical production facilities have grown greatly. The organs for the creatures are grown from trees or mortals altered using surgery and sorcery.

The skeletons for the biomechanicals are forged from carbon-steel and iliaster in foundries and then assembled by skilled craftsmen. Unlike the factories and research laboratories, the organic biomechanical production site could not be transplanted to the Fourth with the rest of Zethu's holdings. Therefore, House Zethu must protect the harvesting sites from take-over to protect its valuable biomechanical assets.

The River Phlegton (Burning Iron)

Phlegton was once a major source of raw materials for the industrial complexes. The burning river is cold and dry now, forcing the Houses to ship material along the Iron Road. The valley of the Phlegton is a dumping ground for scrap, haunted by wastrel ghosts and homeless demons. Sometimes, eruptions and lava flows higher in the Pit cause the solidified iron to melt and the river valley to flood.

The River Acheron (Foul Water)

Like Phlegton, waste is dumped into the already-foul waters of the Acheron. By the time this river reaches the Sixth, it is old and tired. The Acheron once spilled out into a swamp at the edge of the Sixth, but this swamp has long since been built over, so the Acheron now serves as the sewers of Dis and several other cities and fortresses.

The River Styx (Mournful Blood)

As the Styx must be fortified to guard against incursions from the creatures of the Fifth, it does not suffer the ignominious fate of the other rivers. The Styx's fast flow is tapped to power water-wheels and dams, and its bloody waters are channelled into

various chemical works (notably the biomechanical harvesting grounds).

The Styx encircles the whole border of the Sixth. The river is too fast-flowing to cross easily, so dozens of great bridges arc over the blood to the Garden's edge of the Seventh. With the uproar and chaos caused by the Free City heresy, these bridges have become war zones patrolled by House troops.

A character touching the Styx suffers SR8 Corruption. Crossing the Styx by swimming requires a Swim check (DC 30).

The Minotaur

The Minotaur Line follows the Styx for the most part, running in a great arc around three-quarters of the Sixth circle. It has stations at Redhive and near the Vaults of Mammon, as well as at great foundries and factories where slaves and raw materials are unloaded. The line to Dis was blown up during the Breaking of Oaths. Another branch line crosses into the Seventh Circle.

Dis

The City of Dis is the axis on which the whole Infernum turns. If Pandemonium is the dark and twisted intellect of the Pit, then Dis is its heart, pumping iliaster and corruption around the whole of Hell.

Dis, City of Trade. Dis, City of Industry. Dis, City of Agony. It was in Dis that Astyanath and Zethu discovered how to extract iliaster from souls, thus allowing the demon race to survive. It was in Dis that Carthenay ruled, building the foundation for its House. It was in Dis that the Zethu artificers created the first biomechanical warriors that would prove to be the salvation of their House. Dis has birthed more wonders and horrors than anywhere else in the Infernum.

It was the grandest of the cities. True, it stands slightly outside the fashionable districts of the Seventh, but crossing the Skinless Bridge to Dis was an event to be savoured in a young demon's life. Dis was the heart of the post-war renaissance in Infernal technology and society that came with the rise of the torture palaces.

Then it all went wrong. As one, the demons of Dis revolted. The Lords of the City were assassinated. The chains of the damned souls were broken, and the doctrine of the Breaking of Oaths was publicly displayed throughout the City. While the roots of the Free City heresy are still a mystery to the Infernum,

The House of Charon

A minor offshoot of House Haimon, the Charonites control security and trade along the Styx. Their black vessels reach the shores of the Sunless Sea, and bring souls down from the Upper Hell via the Acheron. The Charonites are also notorious spies and information brokers, bringing news from the Garden and the Malebolge back up the Pit.

the dissatisfaction within the City was well known. As Dis became more powerful, the Houses wrapped the folk of Dis in more and more Covenants. The politics of the city became intolerably constricted until something broke.

That does not explain why Dis, host to more torture palaces than anywhere else in the Infernum, chose to emancipate its damned souls. The dead are Free in Dis, given the same rights as mortals or demons. They must still be tortured, but they are expected to volunteer for this. These and other commands are handed down by the city council of Dis, an organisation of demons and other citizens who rule the city and – by extension – are the opposition to the Heads of the Houses and the whole Infernum. To protect themselves from sorcery, the councillors keep their identities secret.

Physically, Dis is divided into five districts – the trade quarter of Usury, the alleyways and parks of Malice, the industrial section of Torment, the slums of Despair and the courts of Damnation. The city is protected by a massive wall of soulstone that has never been breached. Dis has a port within the walls, which connects by flooded tunnels with the Sunless Sea.

The downward side of Dis is on the bank of the Styx. Bridges cross from the city walls to the far side. On the opposite wall of Dis, the Iron Road ends at the Geryon Gate.

Dis is described more fully in *Book of the Conqueror*.

Abandoned Estates of House

Zethu

There are certain things the Zethu made that they never released, because they could not be sure they would work. How does one test the battle-effectiveness of a liquid that turns shadows into something hungry, or cast a spell that uses the caster as a component? Now, with these secrets left behind for whatever scavengers happen upon them, much is being painfully learned about the legacy of the Zethu.

House Zethu's holdings on the Sixth are less than a fifth of their original size. Their land has been taken by, in order of theft, the forces of the Free City of Dis, the House armies (primarily Sturrach, Carthenay and Zethu) who are besieging the city, and the

unaligned and mercenary demons of the Sixth. The remaining Zethu holdings are centred on the Fortress of Redhive and the Biomechanical Harvesting Grounds.

The Zethu retreat from the Sixth was hasty and panicked; in those chaotic days just after the revolt of Dis, no demon could know what had changed. Covenants had been broken wholesale – what other foundations of Infernal society might crack and break? The Lords of the Zethu fled, carrying what treasures and weapons they could and leaving biomechanical guardians as a rearguard.

After this exodus, it became apparent that the demons of the Free City were essentially contained within Dis, and that the Breaking of Oaths was not spreading as quickly as an invading army. The House could not safely move back to the Sixth – but the Lords of House Zethu were able to send a host of artificers and trapsmiths down to fill their old halls with thousands of lethal traps. The abandoned estates are



now a single vast death-trap filled with the forgotten treasures of the Unveilers. There are war-machines too big to take, iliaster vaults still filled with Agony and Sorrow, weapons and armour and libraries of sorcery that could make a demon a Lord of Hell – if it can get past the traps.

Fortresses and Strongholds

Asylum

I called them mad! And they called me mad, and damn it, they outvoted me.

The Fortress of Asylum is an oddity in the Infernum – healing and care are virtually unknown. Injured demons who are unable to defend themselves are thrown into the spawning pits to be recycled into the next generation. There are a few demons, though, who are too powerful to be destroyed, or who have secret knowledge that must be preserved, or who hold vital Covenants. These demons who cannot be destroyed but also cannot be permitted to roam the Pit freely are incarcerated here in Asylum. It is also used to interrogate captured demons before dissolving them. Asylum is ruled by House Astyanath.

Physically, the Asylum is modelled on mortal madhouses, but is hundreds of times larger.

Redhive

This stronghold is the heart of the Zethu harvesting grounds, and so is the one outpost of House Zethu left on the Sixth Circle. Redhive's Lord enjoys the services of tens of thousands of biomechanicals, which swarm in and out of the lower levels of the vast hive-shaped fortress. Without the support of Dis' torture palaces, Redhive suffers from a lack of iliaster. Biomechanical warriors must be sent to trade on the Seventh or to escort iliaster shipments along the Iron Road.

The current master of Redhive is a deceiver of House Zethu called Gaug. He is well aware of Redhive's precarious situation, and is considering defecting to House Astyanath – only his covenanted bond to Zethu keeps him in check.

Vaults of Mammon

The Vaults of Mammon are the foundation of the Carthenay's power. The vaults are built into a mountain beneath sheets of granite and iron and guarded by the

strongest defensive force in the whole Infernum, but its truest defences are two-fold. Firstly, the Vaults of Mammon have enough economic sway to dictate the flow of Infernal commerce. The basic unit of currency – the crown – always buys the same amount of iliaster, but the Vaults can control how much iliaster there is available to buy. A word from the Vaults condemns thousands of demons to Dissolution.

The other defence of the Vaults is a potent two-way warding. Demons sent into the vault can never leave, saving the most exceptional circumstances. The sorcerers of House Carthenay have developed a ritual to permit a demon to pass through the Vault's wards, but the components of this ritual are a closely guarded secret. Therefore, any prospective thief would find himself locked in the Vaults with the treasure even after he bypassed the myriad guards, watchtowers, locked doors and traps.

There is such treasure in the vaults, though to make it almost worth the risk. The main wealth of the vaults is in iliaster. Great tanks hold enough plasmic iliaster to feed the Infernum for a decade, but this is only a fraction of the Vault's contents. There are cellars filled with bottle after bottle of Agony. Chests hold calcified Strain, or Sorrow crystallised into gemstones. There are vaults filled with souls soulshaped into coins and treasures. Not all the treasures are spiritual, either – the Vaults hold more gold and jewels than the wildest dreams of avarice.

Adventures

The Sixth Circle is in chaos. Between the Zethu estates being looted, and the siege of the Free Cities, there is so much conflict and confusion here that there is plenty for characters to do.

- ⊗ A Zethu Lord hires the characters to retrieve some item from his estate. He gives them directions to the item and tells them how to bypass the defences. As they travel through the estate, however, they find evidence that what they are retrieving is a bomb. Are they being set up?
- ⊗ One of the characters is mistaken for a Free City heretic and is arrested by forces of House Sturrach. Before he is put to death, however, another gang of Oathbreakers make the same mistake and free him. Does the character go with his rescuers or trust that the Houses will discover their mistake? And just who is this Oathbreaker doppelganger anyway?
- ⊗ The characters are hired in Golgotha by a mysterious demon Lord. Their initial missions are simple raids on construction sites, the Iron

Road and so on, but it soon becomes apparent that their master is a Cacaphactoi drone who is communicating with its machine masters using a brazen head. Do they obey the machine city or defy its commands. And what are they building for it?

THE SEVENTH CIRCLE - DELIGHT

'Oh no' she whispered as she peered through the grating, 'it's a baby. Those demon bastards have a human kid in there. What are they doing to it?'

He laid his hand on her shoulder. 'Demons can't feel things like we do. Their senses are too coarse. They'll possess that child and use it as a... a device to touch and to feel and to know. It's already too far gone. It's be a mercy to kill it.'

'But he's so young—'

'Old enough to have been used for years. They can start in the womb, you know. Trust me — that child's been used to do worse things than you can dream of, even now. It all wears away the soul until there's nothing left. Then it can only feel like they do, and they'll discard it or use it to sire another.'

The Seventh Circle is known as the Garden of Unholy Delights. In the bright days before the revolt of Dis, the demon philosophers reasoned that the Seventh was the most wonderful of all the Circles. It was plain to see that the uppermost three Circles had the purpose of providing souls and the next three of providing the machinery for turning these souls into iliaster. This iliaster would then flow down like a deluge of refreshing rain into the gardens.

Here are the pleasure-domes and palaces of the demons. There is no open war here, no brutality or starvation. Here is decadence, depravity and unholy joy. No warring angel has ever fought its way past the Stygian Wall, nor has any Harrower or free mortal ever raided the slave pits of the Seventh.

Here, the Infernum is unchallenged.

Terrain features

This is the social whirl. This is the dance of rose and thorn.

The Seventh's terrain varies widely. A quarter of the Circle is a desert bordered by blasted heaths. The rest

of the Circle is heavily forested, with clearings in the forest that contain fortresses and ornamental gardens. Like the Third, a network of canals goes through the Circle, where sail demonic pleasure-boats.

Wood of Suicides (CR 4)

The demons have dug many ornamental spiked pits in the wood, to catch renegade mortals who succumb to the death-wish of the trees.

The orchards of the Wood of Suicides is one of the most profitable soulfields in the whole Infernum. Souls of those who committed suicide plummet from the skies and impale themselves on the sharp thorn-trees. These tattered souls must be quickly harvested by disentangling them from the thorns and branding them; if a soul is not removed within a few hours of landing, it is absorbed into the tree. The shapes of damned souls can be seen within the trees, anguished human outlines struggling against the bark.

The whispers of the Wood of Suicides are dangerous. The tree-soul hybrids are skilled at driving those who listen to them, drawing on all the sorrows of the soul to feed the hunger of the wood. The demons who harvest souls from the wood have their ears stoppered or removed to protect them.

A character in the Wood of Suicides must make a Will save (DC 15) every ten minutes. If this saving throw is failed, the character becomes vulnerable to the trees' suicidal impulses. He suffers a -4 penalty to his Armour Class and to all saving throws as he subconsciously puts himself in danger. Furthermore, whenever the character is presented with an obvious overwhelming danger (a cliff, a spawning pit, a rampaging hulk), the character must make another Will save (DC 15) to resist throwing himself into the danger.

Blasted Desert (CR 6, SR 10)

The outlines of the Haimon Ziggurats recall those of the pyramids of the Blasted Desert. As above, so below.

The Blasted Desert is, according to legend, the result of the impact of the angel Azazel who was one of the first after Lucifer to fall. The desert sands are the white of bleached bone and taste of sulphur and cinnamon. Strange black pyramids rise from the heart of the desert; these structures predate the Infernum (and according to some accounts, predate the fall of the angels themselves).

The borders of the desert are a shanty town of tumbledown fortresses and hovels. The Seventh Circle is a desirable place for a demon to make its home, so lesser demons who desire the delights of the Seventh have taken up residence in the cheapest, most marginal territory available – the edges of the Blasted Desert. These hovels are sheltered from all but the worst of the Blast Storms, but especially potent storms wipe out hundreds every year.

The Blast Storms begin with energy crackling across the sands of the desert. Bolts of lightning leap up from the ground into the sky, setting the clouds alight and sending sheets of flame and hellfire rushing through the air. Creatures exposed to a Blast Storm suffer 2d6 points of hellfire damage each round unless they find shelter. The average Blast Storm lasts for 10d10 minutes.

Larval Swarms & Demon Nurseries

The gardens of the Seventh contain the majority of the House spawning pits. A demon only takes a few months to grow to maturity, and during this time it is kept in a House nursery. These are surprisingly dangerous places; the demonic larvae are voraciously hungry and attack anything that enters their grove. The demons who tend these groves spray themselves in protective foul-tasting chemicals or just use damned souls to do the work.

Demon larvae are quite valuable, especially those of the Houses. As a larva will one day develop its unique House mutation, it can be sold to a rival group or House who needs that special ability. Riethii succubus-larvae are understandably sought after, as are Sturrach fiends or hulks and Zethu artificers.

Geysers of Corruption (SR 10+)

Geysers of Corruption are a natural by-product of the sheer depravity of the Seventh. The soil rebels against the evils and sins perpetrated upon it, resulting in an earthquake and a massive jet of earth and stone and blood from out of the ground. The accumulated sin explodes out from this epicentre in a shockwave of corruption. The demons delight in these geysers, seeing them as signs of strength and power. A good demon party ends with Hell itself vomiting in disgust.

Special Rules

The whole of the Seventh Circle is SR7.

The Seventh is the heart of demonic power and influence. Political manipulation here is especially rewarded – forcing enemies into Covenants garners an extra 5% experience.

Furthermore, the Seventh is ruled completely by the Houses – there are a handful of independent demons here, but certainly no free humans or uncorrupted angels. Characters travelling in the Seventh will be attacked almost immediately if they are discovered as not being allied to a House.

Notable Locations

The Seventh has a wealth of notable locations; tales of the Circle are told throughout the Infernum, and it has attained legendary status in the minds of younger demons assigned higher up the Pit.

Stygian Wall

'So if we get invaded, what do we do?'

'Let the Astyanath handle it.'

'And what if they're thinking the same thing?'

A great defensive wall stands on the abmouth bank of the Styx. The Wall was built after the war, to keep the Seventh safe should Sturrach forces again rampage through the Infernum. The sides of the wall are decorated with images of hellish torments and delights – demonic artistry at its finest. The Stygian Wall is manned by troops from Houses Astyanath and Riethii, who vie with each other to see who can get the biggest bribes from demons trying to get through the gates without a pass. The wall is ready to be the subject of a vast *warding* but this spell has never been put in place.

The heads impaled on the Stygian Wall are notable; they are still alive, and cry out when they spy intruders.

Lake Inferno

While Hell does not have seasons, some demons celebrate them anyway. In spring, well-bred demon couples stroll along the shores of Lake Inferno, dipping souls into the lava for sport. A male can prove his skill by skipping souls along the tops of the flames.

In truth, this is a part of the Sunless Sea. Lake Inferno is a lake of flame that is the largest open body of liquid in the Seventh. Watery canals and rivers run into the lake, creating steamy regions much prized by the Riethii. Sinew-wood craft sail Lake Inferno, heading into the tunnels and the Sunless Sea. To guard against pirate raiders, three fortresses float on artificial islands around the whirlpool entrances to the tunnels, ready to blast any invader into ashes.

Theatre of Knives

The famous Theatre of Knives is the greatest duelling arena in the Pit. It has become absurdly over-elaborate; where once it was a simple maze, now it is a series of nine complex arenas, each with their own traps and special rules. All the arenas are in almost constant use; there is just enough time to scrape the remains of the loser off the floor before starting the next bout. Not all of these duels are formal duels between aggrieved demons – more and more are gladiatorial bouts performed for the entertainment of the crowd instead of to settle a dispute.

Hiring the Theatre for a battle costs fifty crowns; a seat in the audience stalls costs a horn for a cheap seat.

The nine arenas are:

- ⊗ **The Arena of Knives:** The oldest and most famous of the arenas, the Arena of Knives consists of thousands of blades of all sizes, floating in the air. These blades are exceedingly sharp; a victim pushed or falling onto a sword will be cut deeply. Fighters can climb on these floating blades, use them as weapons or hurl them towards a foe. The Arena of Knives is the most prestigious of the nine.
- ⊗ **The Arena of Flame:** The Arena of Flame is built over an inlet of Lake Inferno. Iron paths run through the liquid fire, allowing a surefooted demon to move without falling into the fires.
- ⊗ **The Temple:** A common place for sorcerous duels, this ancient ruin has caches of iliaster hidden throughout it. Cunning mirrors and mechanical eyes allow the audience to see the duellists as they creep through the ruined corridors.
- ⊗ **The Spawning Pits:** This arena is built in and over an Astyanath spawning pit. Defeated duellists are always thrown into the pits, and walkways over the acid baths have led to the death of more than a few clumsy fighters. Larva spawned here traditionally ascend to high office within House Astyanath.
- ⊗ **The Shadow Maze:** The walls of this maze are made of shifting shadow. Some of the walls

are physical barriers, but others are immaterial. Navigating the maze takes guile and keen senses.

- ⊗ **The Garden:** This garden shows the best of demonic ingenuity – while it is tended by the Astyanath, it includes wondrous creatures bred by Oblurots, Glabretchi and Zethu.
- ⊗ **The Killing Ground:** A massive open area suitable for pitched battles. This is one of the two arenas large enough for artillery to be used.
- ⊗ **The Sky Arena:** The eighth area hangs over the others. While it is normally used for duels between fiends and imps, there are enough floating platforms and gauntflyer perches for land-bound demons to participate. Hellcannons are stationed at the edges of the arena to blast any combatant who flies out of bounds.
- ⊗ **The Blood Pit:** The most brutal and popular of the arenas, the Blood Pit is just that – a pit made slippery with blood and ichor. There is no room for clever tactics or finesse here, as the fighters are dumped into a narrow pit where brute force will always win out.

Astyanath Vineyards

The wines of the Infernum are Agony and Sorrow, and the best vintages of these are made here, in the Astyanath Vineyards. There are no torture palaces or automatic torture devices here; instead, all the agony is personally inflicted by skilled demonic crafters. The vines are souls, impaled on posts and tended by torturers. The bulk of the crop is Agony; Sorrow is much more demanding, requiring the victim feel remorse and regret. In some cases, a half-dozen or so demons might be employed tormenting one soul to the point of madness and overwhelming anguish – fine Sorrow fetches a high price in the Tattered Market and the reputation of House Astyanath's wines are unmatched.

The Tattered Market

'Angel feathers!' 'Blackest souls! Blasphemers, serial killers, child slavers! Two oboli each, a bargain!' 'Who'll buy my feet? Roasted feet, straight off the griddle!' 'Daguerreotypes of Lady Barbellion unclothed, four-to-a-claw!'

The wildest and most popular market in the whole Infernum, the Tattered Market is the size of a city. Absolutely anything is available here for the right price. Weapons from the mortal realm are sold at one stand next to souls, or roasted spawn-meat seasoned with Agony, or picked brains of Zethu artificers ripe for interrogation. The market slowly moved around the Seventh as new stalls are added at one end and older stalls shut down at the rear of the market.

The security of the Tattered Market is maintained by Riethii hulks, who have full sanction to destroy any demon who interferes with commerce. The hulks have a rather simple-minded attitude towards their duty, being much more interested in keeping the peace than finding out who is to blame. By ancient tradition, entertainers are sacrosanct in the market. A character who makes a daily Perform check (DC 25) may dwell in the market, regardless of his nature or crimes committed outside. Even unbranded souls or mortals can stay in the market by entertaining the demons. An entertainer is permitted two companions who are equally sacrosanct.

Anyone may set up a stall, but the masters of the market take a five percent cut of all sales. The masters are all scions of House Riethii, who dwell in a mobile fortress at the heart of the market, called the Patchwork Tower.

The Dark Carnival

The Dark Carnival spends most of the year travelling with the Tattered Market, except when it is invited to the best parties and celebrations in gardens across the Seventh. The Carnival consists of the best entertainers and performers of House Riethii, although Astyanath and Sturrach performers are not unheard of. The Carnival is a non-stop celebration of lust and indulgence. Drugs and Agony flow like water, orgies break out in the streets at random intervals, mortals are set alight to run through the carnival as living torches. Those who enter the Carnival waive all rights and protections; all flesh is a toy for others here.

Gambling is the other great entertainment in the Carnival. Souls can be won and lost on the tables. Games of chance are the most common; a lucky demon can win the Covenant of a House Lord or a fortune in iliaster, then lose it all in a moment. Mortals, with their chance-altering abilities, are forbidden to participate and are added to the stakes on sight.

The mistress of the Dark Carnival is a powerful succubus named Myoni.

Dream

'Yes, this is a lie. You're very perceptive and wise. But it's close enough to the truth, and it's the best thing you'll ever have. So why not believe it?'

The heart of the Riethii estates is the land of Dream. There is an unearthly beauty here in Hell, a soul-wrenching wonder that makes one believe that the demons are capable of perfection and redemption.

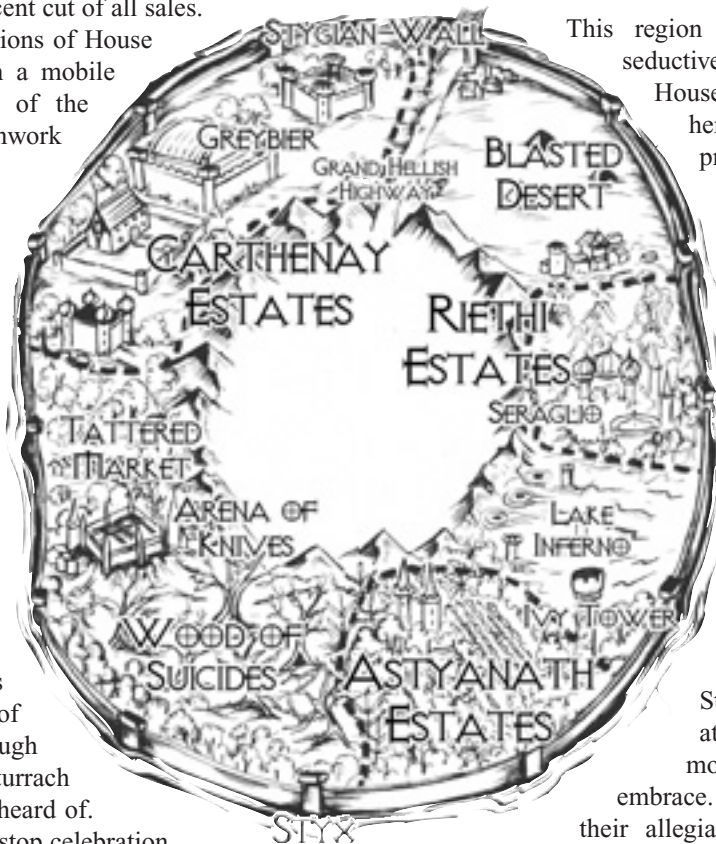
Dream is a lie.

This region is among the most seductive of the creations of House Riethii. The beauty here is calculated and practised; there is nothing truly inspired or genuine about it. The Riethii stole all these wonders from the dreams of mortals and angels and built them without understanding why they are beautiful. Dream is not so much an echo of Heaven as it is a theatre set of Heaven.

Still, the land of Dream attracts angels and mortals to the Riethii's embrace. More sorcerers owe their allegiance to the Seducer's House than any other.

Estates of House Carthenay

The estates of House Carthenay cover a full third of the Circle. The House purchased most of this territory from the Riethii and Astyanath, so it reflects the influence of the other Houses instead of its Carthenay owners. Imagination is one thing the Carthenay have never been accused of, so the fortresses here are squat grey castles or pointlessly gaudy and jewel-encrusted, the gardens regimented and designed with an eye for showing off one's possessions or for supporting slaves instead of for beauty.



That said, many of the demons of House Carthenay do attend the balls and parties of the Seventh; it is their only break from the tedium of tallying the possessions of the House or studying precedents in Infernal law. The Carthenay are the lawyers as well as the bankers of Infernal society, so much time is spent studying in the libraries on the Estate.

The estates are densely populated by unaligned demons and mercenary garrison troops. The defences of the estates are well-built, through they have never been severely tested. House Carthenay lacks effective offensive troops, but believes itself capable of even withstanding an assault from its erstwhile ally House Sturrach, as long as it can augment its own armies with mercenaries.

Estates of House Astyanath

The Astyanath Estates are famed for their rose gardens and thorn mazes. Of all the Houses, the Astyanath have the most elegance and grace. Theirs is a terrible, painful beauty, and it is reflected in their holdings. These gardens are also the first line of defence; the hedges are hard as iron, and the thorn bushes are sharp enough to pierce armour.

The fortresses of the Astyanath are made of glass and obsidian and rise high above the trees. They catch and reflect the red light of the Morningstar at dawn, and are momentarily suffused with a glow like fresh-spilled blood.

The wealth of House Astyanath is in its vineyards and its torture palaces. The efficiency and purity of their iliaster is second to none, and it flows in the parties and orgies of the Seventh. There is a sharpness to the air here; images seem brighter and the screams sound louder.

Estates of House Riethii

The Riethii Estates are lurid in the extreme. Everywhere are images of lust and indulgence and desire. Erotic statuary and alluring curves are a part of every fortress and structure in their lush estates. While sex is the indulgence the Riethii are best known for, it is only one of the infinity of delights offered by the House of Seducers. If bloodthirst is more to a demon's taste, then there are the Riethii labyrinths and hunting grounds where hellhounds stalk unfortunate slaves. The Riethii mastery of drugs and flesh-warping is second to none; want a mortal physically altered to withstand a demon's lusts? The Riethii can provide.

The Riethii estates operate in a strictly feudal fashion. The Lord or Lady of the manor is the undisputed ruler of a domain, served or serviced by a host of peasants. Each Lord must maintain a force of knights to defend the domain or support his Covenanted master. Feuds and internal warfare is as common on the Riethii estates are just as common as passionate affairs and wild entertainments.

The estates extend from the shores of Lake Inferno to the Blasted Desert. The Riethii estates are hotter than the rest of the Circle; from steamy jungles to searing desert winds, the oppressive blood-heat runs through all the Riethii domains, dulling the mind and inflaming the senses. The Riethii estates are not seen; they are felt.

Fortresses and Strongholds

The Seventh Circle contains some of the most famous fortresses of the Infernum; while few of these strongholds have ever been attacked, they are the homes of the mightiest and most influential demons of the Pit.

Ivy Tower

The tallest fortress on the Seventh, Ivy Tower is home to the fiends of House Astyanath. The tower rises like a green mountain from the forest. Thick growths of ivy wind their way around the fortress. Souls are entombed in the greenery, which feeds on their plasm and grows ever thicker. Strands of razor-sharp thorn are twined through the ivy; when the tower is attacked, it can be made to spin at high speed. The strands lash out in great arcs when the tower spins, slicing any flying attackers into pieces.

As Ivy Tower is secure against aerial assault, and the surrounding gardens contain enough troops and defensive lines to block land-based attacks, it is deemed one of the strongest fortresses in the holdings of the Astyanath and is used for their most secret councils.

Unknown to the Astyanath, though, there is a spy within the tower. A mortal soul named Simon, in the service of House Riethii, has managed to hide himself in the ivy next to the council chamber window. He cannot move and vines are growing out of his phantasmal intestines, but should he ever manage to escape his green tomb, he could tell his Riethii masters very interesting things about the plans of House Astyanath.

Greybier

A fortress of the Carthenay, Greybier is testament to the House's talent for foresight and cunning. The grey mausoleum contains uncounted tombs, each of which holds a demon captured in battle. These demons are held in stasis within Greybier until they are needed – some will be exchanged, others thrown into spawning pits, others Covenanted and forced to perform some final mission for House Carthenay. Greybier is as close as Hell comes to having a prison for demons.

Above the tombs of Greybier is a vast hall where younger demons record the details of the prisoners of Greybier. Research is one of House Carthenay's strengths, so the demons collate news and rumours to discover the secrets of those who sleep below – one never knows when a scrap of gossip from the Second will reveal that a minor demon in the basement actually holds a debt from a Glabretch Lord. The upper halls of Greybier are also home to the mortal sorcerers who bind the demons to the tombs.

Seraglio

The stronghold Seraglio does not hold the seductive demonesses of House Riethii.

It holds their children.

Uniquely among demon-kind, the malcubi can bear and sire half-demon children. Normally, this process requires two, a man and a woman. Other breeds of demons can have a gender, but this is a mere affectation – except for the malcubi and those possessed of certain mutations, the demons are sterile, capable of reproducing only through the spawning pits.

However, House Riethii has discovered how to induce male-aspect demons to produce a seed that quickens in the womb of their succubi. This magic is a secret of House Riethii – if the other Houses knew that their lustful scions were giving away House mutations so promiscuously, there would be war. These secret children, the offspring of Sturrach hulks or Carthenay slavers or Zethu beasts in congress with Riethii succubi, are kept in Seraglio and trained to be the superior of their parents. This secret breeding program is a new development for House Riethii, but the superiors are confident that it will prove to be a great success.

Seraglio appears to be just another one of the Riethii pleasure-palaces at first glance. The children are kept

in secret gardens that are warded against magical detection and scrying. Savage fiends guard the hidden groves where the stern teachers prepare the children for their destinies on the battlefield.

Adventures

Seventh Circle games generally centre on politics and intrigue.

- ⊗ A patron of the characters is having a party, and the entertainments are up to them to organise. How do they impress a bunch of degenerate, jaded demons who have been partying for centuries.
- ⊗ A faustian sorcerer of the Zethu is planning to defect to House Riethii. She must be stopped, but if she knows her disloyalty has been noticed, she will likely panic and flee the Unveilers altogether. The characters must find her Riethii contacts and remove them without the sorcerer finding out, or otherwise ensure she does not leave the service of House Zethu.
- ⊗ Pirates rise out of Lake Inferno from the Sunless Sea and raid the coasts. They kidnap several important hellkin and demand ransoms. The characters must track the pirates and rescue the bound demons, while also fending off agents from rival Houses who want the characters to fail.

THE EIGHTH CIRCLE – MALLEBOLEE

The Nine Citadels glare at each other across the gulf of Pandemonium. As yet, no demon has dared start a full-scale war here, below the Stygian Wall.

But they look at the blasted field where they murdered angels, and remember.

The volcanoes of the Eighth Circle rise out of the unnaturally verdant Seventh, signalling a vengeful return to the broken, scorched land of the Fifth and Sixth Circles. Clouds of ash and sulphur hang above burning mountains of incalculable height. Each dawn, the heat of the Morningstar pushing through the tight gaps of the encircling mountains melts the stone on the peaks, causing another barrage of eruptions and earthquakes. Tongues of lava coil around basaltic boulders. The air is hot and black; the wind a poisonous current of sulphur and sparks. The only life that endures here are twisted horrors.

Creatures have crossed these mountains before, but always at terrible cost.

Ten great rifts pierce the mountains, ten passes lead onto the Capital City of Pandemonium. These rifts are called the Malebolge.

Here, the great game of the Infernum is played.

Terrain features

This is the wheel of shadow and fire. This is the last redoubt of conspiracy.

The only terrains in the Eighth Circle are the burning mountains and the roads.

Burning Mountains (CR 10)

The mountains surrounding the Eighth Circle are incredibly steep. A Climb check (DC 20) is required each round to avoid falling 1d6 x 20 feet. Every ten minutes, a character moving on the mountains faces one of the following dangers. Assume each danger extends for 200 feet.

- 1. Landslide:** The mountain face ahead of the character collapses and slides downwards (see above under Avalanches on the Second Circle, but increase all DCs by + 10 and the damage to 12d6).
- 2. Earthquake:** All creatures must make a Balance check (DC 25) or fall prone and take 1d6 points of damage. The earthquake continues for 2d6 rounds; each round, roll 1d10. On a 1, there is a landslide. On a 2, a gaping crevasse opens beneath the characters.
- 3. Eruption:** A sudden burst of lava sprays hot rock over the characters. All characters must take 8d10 points of fire damage (halved on a successful Reflex save at DC20).
- 4. Gaping Crevasse:** A crevasse opens beneath the character. He must make a Reflex save (DC 25) or fall in. The crevasse is 3d6 x 10 feet deep (inflicting 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet of depth when the character falls). After 1d6 + 2 rounds, the crevasse closes again, crushing the character for 6d6 points of damage each round if he is still within it.
- 5. Poisonous Gasses:** The mountains exhale poisonous gases; the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) each round or suffer 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage. The gas cloud lasts for 2d6 rounds.
- 6. Roll Again Twice and apply both results.**

Roads

Three great roads and nine lesser ones cross the Eighth Circle. The outermost road, called the Folly Way, is thronged with merchants, hawkers, beggars and supplicants who wait for the carriages of great demon Lords coming down the Pit. There is a border-march beyond Folly Way containing a few estates and minor holdings of the Houses, such as the Oblurott farms. The inner road, on the banks of the terrible river Cocytus, is the Last Road. Connecting the two and running down one of the ten valleys is the Grand Hellish Highway, a road of skulls guarded by the elite Pandemonium Guard.

The Grand Hellish Highway opens into the Plain of Skulls where the demons rebelled against their angelic masters at the beginning of the Infernum.

The nine lesser roads go to the House Citadels which stand in the other nine valleys of the Malebolge.

Special Rules

The whole of the Eighth Circle is SR8.

Fortresses and Strongholds

Nine Citadels rise to rival the mountains from the floor of the Malebolge. Clockwise from the Grand Hellish Highway, they are the Houses of Oblurott, Lictat (Jelac), Haimon, Astyanath, Riethii, Glabretch, Zethu, Sturrach and Carthenay. These citadels were once the administrative centres and palaces of the Dominions when they ruled over Hell, but that was hundreds of years ago and the castles have grown immeasurably over the centuries.

Royal Citadel of House Oblurott

The Oblurotts were faced with a unique problem when they established this great citadel here – it is so far from their estates on the Third that getting food down to the palace kitchens is a formidable logistical problem. The other Houses live on torment alone, but the bloated Oblurotts have more of an appetite. The solution was to establish farms on the Seventh Circle (not even the creative Oblurotts could wring life out of the burnt soil of the Malebolge) to supplement the vast larders and icehouses that are attached to the fortress like cancerous appendages.

Inside, the citadel contains the largest banqueting

chamber in Hell, which doubles as the throne room of the Lord of the Oblurott. The banquet there never ceases, not even for an instant. Diners leave or collapse or burst, but the eating never stops. The tables there are so vast and covered with food that some human dishes have even conceived and given birth to the next course while waiting to be eaten.

Royal Citadel of House Haimon

The Haimon Citadel is the quietest and coldest of all. Even the Carthenay throw the occasional formal ball, which is invariably agonisingly stiff and dull. House Haimon seems to have no interest in the doings of the other Houses; the small Citadel exists mainly to house the family diplomats and councillors as they attend summits in Pandemonium.

Many of the towers of the citadel glitter in a strange, unsettling fashion; House Haimon is fascinated by the grinding ice of the Cocytus, and has been experimenting with shaping this ice. Great pipes and tunnels run out from beneath the citadel to the banks of the river.

Royal Citadel of House Astyanath

The Citadel of the Cruel Ones resembles a flower made of steel. The whole upper section is a torture palace of surpassing elegance and efficiency; it is called the Chainwheel and is designed to reduce a soul to purest iliaster in an instant. Its true purpose, however, is the destruction of angels.

Beneath the harsh spires of Chainwheel, the citadel is more conventional. It has a preponderance of sharp edges, but is second only to the neighbouring palace of the Riethii as a venue for celebrations. Secret passages are everywhere in the palace; the Astyanath delight in traps and labyrinths. Unwary guards can find themselves shredded in an instant by a tunnel of knives or trap of lethal chains.

The other notable quality of the Astyanath Citadel is its acoustics. A scream in the basement echoes to the topmost tower, while a whisper in one corridor can

be overheard in a certain place on the far side of the palace. Privacy is impossible unless one knows all the hidden ways of the citadel.

Royal Citadel of House Riethii

The Seducers' Citadel is by far the largest of the palaces here. It is also the most beautiful and most terrible; it is a thing of crystal and glass and steel, arching over the mountains with seeming delicacy when in truth it is harder than stone. The Citadel is called Riethii's Chalice, for it overflows with iliaster. If the feasts never stop beneath Oblurott's roof, then here the masquerade never ends.

One tradition of the Chalice is that all residents must wear masks save when they are alone or with one other person. The making of masks is a respected and profitable craft for the imps and artificers of House Riethii, and many masks contain bound spirits or secret weapons.

The Riethii despise and fear their ugly neighbours of House Glabretch. A wall has been built atop the uncrossable mountains between their two Citadels, just to ensure the foulness of the Glabretchi does not offend the sight of the refined Riethii.

Royal Citadel of House Glabretch

The Glabretch have little use for a Citadel so far from the moliata and their wonderfully foetid homes on the Third. To make themselves at home, they have sprayed the walls of their Citadel with bile and faeces and fungal blooms, bred all sorts of organic growths and latched them onto the stone walls, set filth-burners and miasmic pits in the courtyards and generally made the place as vile as possible. It is not quite the same as being home, though.

The other demon Lords detest the Glabretch. The Pandemonium Guards only let Glabretch visitors and dignitaries cross the Folly Way if their carriages are hermetically sealed, and the Glabretch are not permitted to expand their Seventh and Eighth Circle



holdings beyond certain agreed-upon boundaries. The Foul Ones therefore take special joy in pushing these limits and crashing the parties of the other Houses.

The main purpose of the Glabretch Citadel is as a home for spies. This is the only place where the Glabretchi get a good look at their enemies.

Royal Citadel of House Zethu

The Zethu Citadel is a wonder to behold. Here, the artificers of the Zethu have managed to emulate the living machine of Cacaphractus and bind it to their will. The whole citadel is a single great machine, possessed of a mechanical intelligence bound in cogs of brass and tablets of wax. The being, which calls itself the Tutelary Intellect, is of great wisdom and intelligence, as it is essentially a living library.

The Tutelary Intellect has taken over the espionage and diplomatic aspects of House Zethu while the rulers of the House deal with the upheaval on the Fourth. So far, the other Houses are largely unaware of this change in control, and regard the Intellect as nothing but an elaborate toy.

Royal Citadel of House Sturrach

The Mailed Fist Citadel is a fortress first and foremost. It has a simple purpose; to serve as a reminder to the other Houses that one day, House Sturrach will conquer them. When the armies sweep down across the Malebolge, this fortress will be the lynchpin of their assault. In preparation for this day, the fortress contains vast stockpiles of iliaster and weapons of war, as well as siege weapons aimed at all the other Citadels.

The Zethu are well aware of the danger posed by their proximity to House Sturrach, and have fortified the slopes of the mountains between the two Citadels.

Royal Citadel of House Carthenay

The Carthenay Citadel is a massive, imposing structure, second only to the Chalice in sheer size. One wing, the Debtor's Prison, juts out over the Cocytus. Other halls offer loans and contracts to demons on the very of bankruptcy and Dissolution, as well as to mortal sorcerers newly arrived in Hell. The common tactic is to take the sorcerer to the top of the Citadel, show him the Pit and all the kingdoms therein, and then talk terms.

House Carthenay is aware of its obligations to society and hosts regular celebrations. It has not gone unnoticed that the machine mind of House Zethu is

more spontaneous and fun than a Carthenay party. Another obligation accepted by the House is the funding of the Pandemonium Guard, a technically neutral demon army that protects Pandemonium and the roads. The Guards hardly ever take bribes, mainly because they are all heavily bound to House Carthenay.

Royal Citadel of House Lictat

House Lictat is still exploring their new abode. The former citadel of House Jelac has tens of thousands of rooms, any of which could contain hidden traps and secrets. The last of the Jelac were locked in here for decades without contact with the outside Pit.

The Citadel of House Lictat has crumbled over the years of neglect, so the Malebolge rings with the sound of construction. Massive blocks of masonry are quarried from the mountains and hauled up to the towers of the Citadel. A more pressing problem is the lack of protective sorceries on the Citadel; House Lictat has allied with the Disciples of the Black Thorn to repair this deficiency.

Adventures

Eighth Circle adventures could take place entirely within one of the Citadels. The Eighth is one place where demons from all the Houses are constantly in close proximity, making it ideal as a setting for mixed-House games.

- ⌘ The characters are a band of demons, one from each House, who trade secrets to each other. Each of them gains prestige for discovering secrets of their rivals. Now, however, rumours start circulating that there is a traitor in one of the Citadels. Has one of the characters been discovered and if so, which one? What do the rest do to protect themselves?
- ⌘ On the anniversary of Sturrach's death, a gang of hulks get drunk on agony and decide to avenge their forefather by attacking the Citadel Zethu. The characters have to stop this rampage without alerting House Zethu.
- ⌘ While exploring the archives of their House Citadel, the characters come across ancient architectural plans showing a critical weakness in the Citadel's defences. Do they destroy the document, correct the mistake or sell the plans to a rival?

THE NINTH CIRCLE -

PANDEMONIUM

You have walked in Pandemonium before. In any nightmare where you were lost and panicked and alone in any crowd of blank faces and towering, uncaring buildings, in any moment of panic and despair at the terrible evil and futility of all-that-is... in that time, your soul walked the streets of Pandemonium.

The great and terrible city of Pandemonium occupies the entirety of the Ninth Circle. This most glorious of all the Circles is the heart of Infernal politics and power. The demon House that defeats all the others will claim Pandemonium as its prize.

Cyclopean buildings dominate the cityscape. The largest of these is the magnificent golden tower that is the Palace of the Morningstar, but this is not the only wonder that Second Circleers gawk at. See the great House of Clocks, the noble Courts of Bountiful Injustice, the Auditorium of the Council of the Infernum, the libraries of Pandemonium, the fortress of Azazel and the Silver Spires. Trade your Covenants at the Fleshmarket, or sup the finest iliaster along Mephistopheles Street.

Pandemonium is at least SR9 everywhere, but most landmarks are up to SR12 or higher. The city is described more fully in *Book of the Conqueror*.

The Last Bridge

The only bridge over the River Cocytus runs from the Grand Hellish Highway into the centre of Pandemonium. It is the only safe way to enter the city – flyers are either frozen or scorched depending on whether they fly too close to Cocytus or the Morningstar. The castle of the Pandemonium Guards is built over the bridge. Should an invading army attempt to cross the bridge, it can be destroyed by the Guard using a system of levers and counterweights.

The River Cocytus (Grinding Ice)

The black ice of Cocytus is exceedingly dangerous. It is as cold as the mercy of Hell and even less forgiving. The glaciers and bergs of Cocytus are spat out from a rift beneath the volcanoes of the Eighth Circle (how a burning volcano produces uttermost ice is a mystery House Zethu would love to solve).

A creature within 200 feet of the river (or up to 500 feet above it) suffers 3d6 points of cold damage each round and one point of temporary Dexterity damage each round. A creature who touches Cocytus takes

SR10 + 1d10 Corruption, 6d6 points of cold damage, 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage and 1d4 points of temporary Dexterity damage.

Courts of Bountiful Injustice

Demons are technically not supposed to murder and destroy each other except in times of war. Now this war is more honoured in the breach than in the observance, and war is pretty much pandemic in the Infernum, but murders in Pandemonium and in the more civilised parts of the Seventh and Eighth Circles can result in a demon being dragged before the Courts of Bountiful Injustice, the closest the demons have to a central judiciary.

Now, the court is by definition utterly corrupt – the only punishment it can hand down is forcing a Covenant on the victim, and then using that Covenant to force the victim to perform a task for the benefit of the court judges, the city of Pandemonium or the Infernum as a whole. These tasks tend to be suicide missions, such as hunting down renegades or destroying a Free City.

The courthouse is a great black prison, surmounted by the corpses of those who have defied the court. The Pandemonium Guard are responsible for bringing prisoners before the court (although criminals are often sentenced to bring in the next defendant for trial).

House of Clocks

The mysterious House of Clocks abuts the Palace of the Morningstar. It is a great tower filled with all manner of clocks, none of which show the right time. The ticking is deafening.

The House of Clocks is connected to the network of hellish clocktowers and the brass pillars of the First Circle, all of which were erected by Lucifer to bring the flow of time to the Infernum. Those demons who are aware of the nature of the clocks are therefore loath to interfere with its functioning. The House of Clocks always has a keeper – when one keeper dies, another is drawn to the House. The current keeper is the only non-faustian mortal living in Pandemonium, an insane mortal named Cornelius.

The Auditorium

The Auditorium is a new building in Pandemonium, built by the demons atop the ruin of the Palace of the Thrones. It is a towering, arrogant building, seeming to challenge the golden towers of the Morningstar across the city. Here in the Auditorium, representatives

of all the Houses meet in conclave. This political arena is a sideline to the wars and schemes that are the real markers of power shifts in the Infernum, but controlling the conclave can be a useful tool. The Rose Accord was forged here, as were a thousand other short-lived alliances.

Interestingly, the Auditorium is not neutral territory like the sacred conclaves at Bileflot or the other neutral cities. Assassinations are not unheard of and are investigated by the Pandemonium Guard.

Palace of the Morningstar

Stand on the edge of the First Circle at midnight, and throw yourself off. Assuming you are not caught by the Tempest winds and hurled into the rocks, or burnt by clouds of acid, or mistime your jump and fall into the rising sun, you will fall a hundred score of miles and impale yourself on the golden towers of the Palace of the Morningstar. It is the lowest of the Pit and the heart of the Infernum.

Each day, the towers of the Palace flare so brightly that they blind anyone who looks upon them. A great red sun rises from the central dome, slowly rising towards the upper Circles over the course of the day before sinking back down again, becoming duller and darker as it falls. By the time the Morningstar reaches the Ninth Circle again at twilight, it is a small sphere hardly larger than a man.

The mysterious sect of demons known as the Priests of the Morningstar dwell within the fortress. They insist that their sole purpose is to maintain the city of Pandemonium and keep the Morningstar alight. They have temples throughout the Circles where iliaster is channelled into the Morningstar. Some of this iliaster is gathered by Church stalkers, but several of the Houses find that supporting the Church as an independent organisation has advantages for spying and infiltration.

Adventures

Like the Eighth Circle, the Ninth is ideal for mixed-House and mixed-race games. Every kind of demon can be found on the streets here.

⊗ The abhorei rely on demon candles to provide time for their kingdom, while the Infernum bathes in the temporal flow provided by the Clocks of Hell. The characters are employed to steal one of the great Clocks of Hell from the Clocktower. Can the characters pull off this heist without damaging the mechanism of causality in the Pit?

⊗ The characters find a demon body dumped in the sewers. It is still recognisable; it is the Hierarch of House Oblurott. However, that Hierarch is still alive. Which is the copy and which is the real demon, and how can the characters use this knowledge to their advantage?

⊗ A section of the Mountains of the Tempest breaks off and begins to fall. It lands on the Morningstar, but is too big to be consumed. It is slowly passing through the fires of the sun of Hell, but when it moves through completely, it will fall onto the city. What is to be done to deflect the mountain-fragment before it crushes the city?

⊗ The characters discover that the Ninth Circle is built on an artificial dome. There is another Circle, a Tenth Circle of grinding ice beneath their feet. What

secret lies in the ultimate depths of Hell?



BEYOND THE PIT

The Pit is not the whole of Hell. Travel down the worm-gnawed tunnels found in every Circle, and a demon finds itself in the outer reaches of Hell; an endless labyrinth of fire and darkness and pain. Beyond the light of the Morningstar and the influence of the Clocks, there are the tunnels and caverns of Outer Hell.

The Surface

There is land beyond the outermost expense of the First. Few demons have ever looked upon it, though, as the traveller must pass through the desert winds and wastelands to reach the border. Beyond the Pit, the land becomes a grey moor blanketed by thick grey mists. There are no landmarks here, no kingdoms of the hellkin.

There are creatures in the mist though. Souls fall here too. The mists are a form of ectoplasm, just like the damned souls themselves. The damned can shape the mists into cities and castles and landscapes. The surface reaches are full of petty kingdoms of the dead, where long-passed tyrants strut in echoes of their former glory. This far from the Pit, the Lethe Clouds are thin and weak, so the mortals remember most of their former lives.

The armies of the Infernum have in the past raided these Hadean kingdoms for damned slaves. This is a difficult undertaking, as the damned are much better armed and organised than the terrified, mindless spectres found in the Pit. Such expeditions are undertaken only in times of need, when the Pit needs more iliaster than its damned can provide.

The Tunnels

The Pit itself is but a fraction of the full extent of Hell. The endless tunnel network extends in all directions from the Pit. Tunnel entrances are found on every Circle, although finding one's way from one entrance to another is difficult. Maps and charts of the tunnels fetch a high price and many surprise assaults have been launched by marching an army underground to emerge within an enemy's defences.

The tunnels are dark, hot places. Some are filled with magma, others with boiling or freezing water. The shadows are palpable, thick and cloying like curtains of dead flesh. Fearsome eyeless spawn stalk the corridors, feeding on escaped souls or demons or each other.

The other danger of the tunnel network is the lack of time. The tunnels are outside the full influence of the Clocks of Hell, meaning that creatures who go too deep will find time passing more slowly. The effect of this varies depending on how deep in the tunnels the character is:

Shallow Tunnels: One day in the tunnels is the same as two days in the Pit.

Middle Tunnels: One day in the tunnels is the same as five days in the Pit. Characters cannot heal ability damage.

Deep Tunnels: One day in the tunnels is the same as ten days in the Pit. Characters cannot heal hit point damage.

Far Tunnels: One day in the tunnels is the same as thirty days in the Pit. Character cannot heal any sort of damage or gain levels. They may still accumulate experience.

Gravity in the tunnels is somewhat random – there is always a 'down' towards one cavern floor, but which part of the tunnel is the floor varies from place to place. In some places, gravity is like a crazy corkscrew through the stone.

The Sunless Sea

The largest known cavern contains the fiery Sunless Sea, and what a sea it is. Geysers and falls of flame leap from the cavern roof down into the burning ocean. Sinew-wood and ironclads of the Infernum ride these fiery currents, splashing down into the sea and using it as a shortcut through the Pit. The rivers feeding the sea flow swiftly, making the sea the best route to bring cargos of slaves from the Upper Circles to the lower. Indeed, up until Zethu and Carthenay built the Minotaur, sailing the Sunless Sea was the fastest route through Hell.

The rivers that flow into the Sea flow from the Second, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Circles, while an inlet of the sea extends into the Seventh Circle at Lake Inferno. A maelstrom at the centre of the lake leads into the cavern of the Sunless Sea.

Several important ports are located along the underground coasts. The largest of these is Port Despair on the edge of the Seventh, controlled by House Riethii. Carthenay once controlled a rival to Despair in the City of Storm's Point, but that city has joined the Free City Heresy and is now a haunt of pirates and vagabonds. Of all the Free Cities, Storm's Point is by far the most chaotic and lawless.

Of the pirates of the Sunless Sea, the most feared is Captain Lacoster of the *Dreadnought*. He stole his ironclad warship from House Zethu and has become a terror of the burning seas. It is whispered he is in secret talks with the Abhorei, who plot an invasion of the Infernal side of the Sea now that it is in chaos.

Behemoth and Leviathan

The Sunless Sea is now less than half its former self. It was once a far larger ocean of fire, but the creation of the Pit drove a massive wedge through it, dividing

into two seas. The Sunless Sea is the only one to touch directly on the Pit; the other sea, the Sea of Lament, is accessible only through the tunnels. Two primordial spawn called Behemoth and Leviathan dwell in these seas; Behemoth in the Sunless Sea, Leviathan in the Sea of Lament. Unlike all the rest of their kind, these titanic spawn have some level of intelligence; they think with glacial slowness and in bizarre, alien fashion, but they have minds – and anger. They have been cut off from each other, and blame the hellkin denizens of the Pit for this insult.

Wars with the elder spawn are rare; the creatures are slow to decide anything. Sometimes, they have been known to bud off sections of themselves and raise armies of warspawn that crawl out of the seas and attack the Infernum. These invasions have always been defeated, but a rash of rebellion and dissent among the slave-spawn of the Pit creates disruptions and problems for decades after each invasion.

Houses Oblurott and Riethii have both landed ships on Behemoth, hoping to kill, quell or bind the monster. No-one has ever returned from these expeditions.

Abhor

The civilisation of the Abhorei lies on the far side of the Sunless Sea. The Abhorei are kin to demons; indeed, like House Glabretch, they are descended from renegade demons who fled the angels before the rebellion. The ancestors of the Abhorei left the Infernum before Zethu discovered how to extract iliaster from damned souls, so they never learned to feed in that fashion, nor do they benefit from the Clocks of Hell. The Abhorei have had to... improvise.

Each Abhorei is physically bound to a living host, normally a spawn. The demon feeds from the strength of the host like a parasite to replenish its iliaster. When the host is reduced to a husk, the Abhorei is surgically attached to a replacement. Spawn are the most common hosts, but also the weakest. Demons lack natural iliaster, but mortals and angels make excellent body-halves for the Abhorei. As such hosts can only be found within the Pit, the Abhorei raid and make war on their cousins (they also despise the Infernal demons as quislings and slaves).

Life in the lightless caverns of the Abhorei is similar to that in the Pit. Like their neighbours, new Abhorei are made in spawning pits. Demon-candles stand in the centre of each of their cities, as the immortality of a demon is drained to create pockets of fast-flowing time in the absence of the Clocks.

Sample Abhorei are described on pages 174-178.

The Broken Lands

When the angels fled the Pit during the demon revolt, they searched for a place to take refuge. Heaven and Hell had both rejected them, the Celestial Spheres and the mortal world were both closed to them. Their captain Lucifer had vanished, as had their mightiest Archangels – all save the Archangel Azazel. That wise angel took charge and led his brethren into the depths of the Blasted Desert, into a portal he had created through sorcery.

The portal lead out of Hell entirely, out of all the created worlds. It led beyond the universe, to the previous Creation. The angels emerged into a universe long past its natural life, a realm where the stars were dark and cold and life was almost entirely extinct. Circling around the one guttering sun that had not collapsed into a black hole was a great ring floating in the darkness.

The Brokenlanders live on that ringworld. To a race who have lived on after the end of time, after the Creator has gone onto his next project, the fallen angels were a source of wonder and novelty beyond compare. Today, the surviving fallen angels have a status somewhere between princes and cherished pets in the Broken Lands. The creatures of the ring support the angels in their wars with the Infernum for their own incomprehensible reasons; the forces of the Broken Lands are not powerful enough to conquer Heaven, but a Hell united under Azazel's rule just might.

Invasions from the Broken Lands require a vast expenditure of sorcery to open a portal. The fallen angels prefer to work through agents, as the Broken Lands have very little energy so such efforts are usually beyond them.

Brokenlander footsoldiers and other creatures are described on pages 191-196.

FACTIONS & POWERS

The cries and shouts echoed off the vaulted ceiling of the Auditorium's central council hall. The massive hall was carved of black marble dragged down from the Mountains of Silence and across the icy Cocytus. The ceiling stood six times taller than the largest hulk, and yet it was still scarred by the marks of ancient explosions and hellfire bursts.

Council meetings in the demon city are rarely uneventful.

'This Sturrach aggression will not go unpunished!' roared the Oblurott representative. Jowls of grotesque flesh shook as the demon spoke, but most of the weaker-minded demons in the chamber nodded dumbly as the Oblurott's mutations wrapped its words in a psychic web, making them infinitely more compelling. A few shouted in support. *'Your armies have overreached themselves, and we shall take great pleasure in closing our jaws on them! The days of your brutish ascendance are long passed!'*

Elder demons, however, recognised the Oblurott's words as a mere opening gambit – if the Sturrach diplomat in attendance could be roused to speaking rashly – or even better, to blast the insolent glutton into sizzling globs of hot flesh – then the opinion of the assembled Houses would be turned against Sturrach. The council of the Infernum had little direct influence, but memories of House Sturrach's wars were strong in the minds of many Lords. If the Sturrach betrayed too much ambition, then their allies in House Carthenay might be shaken.

All eyes turned to the Sturrach fiend. It perched on a pillar high above the corpulent Oblurott, its red-veined wings folded tightly around it. Its eyes burned with fury, and several times it opened its beak, but its response when it came was measured and calm. *'We shall not withdraw... until we have secured recompense for your attacks on our Fifth Circle estates. Your greed... is the root of this war.'*

The younger demons booed; some because they were still entranced by the fork-tongued Oblurott's words, but most because they expected some entertaining carnage. In the shadows at the back of the hall, two imps whispered together.

'The Sturrach fiend was restrained. A Covenant?' said one.

The other nodded, and pointed its tale towards a deceiver wearing the livery of House Carthenay. *'The bankers don't want the rest of the Houses turning on their pet army. They've bound the fiend's tongue so he doesn't make an ass of himself.'*

The first imp produced a knife from nowhere, one that glistened strangely. An agonised face swam up to the surface, that of the soul bound within the blade. The second raised its hand and said 'no, not yet'. *'Never kill anyone for free when you can get someone to pay for the privilege. I think House Zethu would pay handsomely for the knowledge of who's holding that fiend's leash, don't you?'*

The Infernum

The august and ancient institution of the Infernum styles itself the greatest power of Hell – and indeed it has encountered no being or order that can stand against the united might of the demons and their armies. Of course, the demons have only ever been united once in their entire history, and that was to betray and exile their creator angels. In every other crisis and danger – the abhorei armadas, the Brokenlander invasions, the rebellion of the spawn, the arrival of the Knights of the Harrowing – the Infernum has been divided against itself, with member Houses trying to use the chaos to their advantage.

In short, the Infernum exists largely out of inertia and little else; no House wants to give up the belief that it can turn two or three others into allies and conquer the whole Pit, so no House withdraws from the one institution that encompasses all the demon nobility.

The Infernum may theoretically rule the entire Pit and include all the territory of the Houses as part of its domain, but it really only controls Pandemonium itself. The Pandemonium Guard is its only standing army.

Councils

The government of the Infernum is made up of three councils, all of which meet in the Auditorium – at least according to the scribes. In truth, the **Arch Conclave** has met in Pandemonium less than a half-dozen times. The Arch Conclave consists of the Heads of the Eight Houses (nine, these days, but House Lictat has never actually participated in an Arch Conclave as the last such council was called to discuss their

claim to Great House status). The Arch Conclave is supposed to meet in Pandemonium, but the difficulties of getting the nine most powerful demons into a city thronged with assassins and sorcerers, not to mention the problems of getting any Glabretchi, let alone *the* Glabretch itself, down past the Seventh mean that it is customary for the Arch Conclave to meet elsewhere in the Pit. The city of the Arch Conclave is always a relatively minor and unimportant place far from any concentrations of House troops, so the nine Lords can be relatively sure that none of them will be attacked (that more House Lords, even House Founders, have been slain in council than anywhere else is not forgotten).

The second council is the **Assembly of Grand Hierarchs of the Infernum** (commonly, the Council of Hierarchs). Each House appoints one Grand Hierarch to the assembly, as does the city of Pandemonium, the faustians and the Houseless Demons. Ambassadors from other powers, including Abhor and even the Brokenlands have been known to attend these councils. The Hierarchs are officially the voices of their respective Houses and orders in the day to day running of the Pit, acting as proxies

for the members of the Arch Conclave. In truth, most Hierarchs are appointed to get rid of them – most are demons too powerful to be allowed to remain in the House Citadels on the Eighth Circle or in the House estates higher up the Pit. Rather than risk killing such a rival, a House Lord might appoint it as a Hierarch, thus removing it from direct contention to the Throne as one of the Hierarch's duties is to arbitrate the succession in a House when the Lord is killed.

The three 'independent' seats – those for Pandemonium, the sorcerers and the demons not part of the Houses – are fiercely contested. Unlike the House-selected Hierarchs who are appointed for as long as the Lords of the Houses keep them there, the other three seats have a tenure of one Hellish year. The Pandemonium Guards can usually enforce their choice for the first seat. The Faustian's Seat is argued over by the various cabals of sorcerers who dwell in Hell – their one common cause is that no sorcerer allied with House Zethu get anywhere near the place. The Malthian League has succeeded in getting one of its members into the Assembly for the last ten years, but the Lictat-supported Black Thorns are mounting a strong challenge.

The third seat is reserved for the Independent demons should rights be claimed by someone from Dis, that obviously being the single largest and strongest organisation of Independents. The Hierarchs have no intention of letting an Oathbreaker within three Circles of Pandemonium, so instead an ivory token is hurled into each independent spawning pit once a year. A larvae will crawl out bearing that token, which gives it the right to fight for the twelfth seat.

The last council is the **Assembly of the Estates**, to which any demon with a fortress belongs. If every fortified demon attended, of course, the Auditorium would overflow with wealthy demon nobles. Only a fraction actually attend, although many do send representatives and possessed proxies to the councils. The Assembly of the Estates is a raucous, ungoverned affair where many arguments are decided through shouting, seduction, sorcery or slaughter (the four pillars of demonic diplomacy), but it is a useful ground for making alliances or enemies.

The Pandemonium Guard privately refer to the Assembly of the Hierarchs as the Hierarchy and that of Estates as the Lowerarchy, with the Arch Conclave being Anarchy (although anarchy is a better description of the Assembly of Estates).



Thrones of the Hierarchs

The thrones of the Hierarchs are beautiful beyond compare, arching elegant tracteries in silver and gold and pearl – such untainted beauty is far beyond the handiwork of the most refined demon. These thrones were stolen from the Palace of the Thrones before it was levelled. When the angels sat in council here, it was upon these seats. Then, there was a thirteenth throne where the master of the Thrones sat. That thirteenth throne, the Seat of Angels, is locked within the vaults of the Auditorium. Any demon who has sat upon it feels an impending *presence* and hears the beating of tremendous wings. None have dared to sit upon this throne for long, but they are also loath to destroy it.

Magistrates

The Court of Bountiful Injustice is the legislative arm of the Infernum. The judges are selected from among the most learned and wise of the demons. In practice, as long as a demon knows the laws sufficiently to pass the wickedly difficult exams set by the existing judges, a simple bribe will put any demon in judge's robes. Brazen heads, possession and other cheats are used to bypass the exams when a House needs a judge in place. Houses Haimon and Carthenay have the most control over the courts. Carthenay has the money to appoint as many judges as it needs, while Haimon has a well-established tradition of scholarship.

The Court's functions are investigating and punishing the breaches of demonic law that occur throughout the Infernum; in reality, its jurisdiction never extends beyond the Seventh most of the time, and it is only invoked when parties from two or more Houses are involved. The Court's only power is to hand down Covenants, which it uses to punish the crime and increase its own influence.

The Pandemonium Guard enforces the Court's wishes, although Covenanted or deputised magistrates are used when the Court must act far from Pandemonium.

The Houses

All of the Nine Great Houses are born from the same roots and share roughly the same structure. At the Head of each House is a single demon of surpassing power and might, referred to as the Head or Lord of the House. This demon has the right to take the House name as its own; the Lord of House Sturrach can call itself the Sturrach if it wishes.

Directly below the House Head is the Court of Lords, comprised of all the most powerful and high-ranking demons in the House. The Court travels with the Head of the House. It is customary for the Court to spend a portion of the year in the family Citadel on the Eighth Circle and the rest of the time at the Head's personal holdings or the House estates. This tradition varies from House to House; the Oblurott Court is basically immobile, while the Glabretch is kept far away from the genteel Eighth Circle. In theory, any demon of the House who rules a domain or has a fortress is a Lord and could attend court, but in general only those invited or powerful enough to demand entry do so.

The Head of House appoints several ministers from its Court; these ministers are responsible for various House activities. There is a minister for sorcery in most Houses, a minister for Iliaster or for War or for Industry. The Head of House also appoints the Hierarch who will sit in the Pandemonic Assembly of Hierarchs and speak for the House.

Should the Head of the House die, then the Lords – the Dukes and Grand Dukes – 'choose' a successor. The Hierarch oversees this process, ensuring that none of the Lords are Covenanted or possessed by enemies of the House and that appointing the new Head will not result in the House being severely damaged or destroyed.

The Head of the House gives feudal domains to its courtiers, who then give further sub-domains to their followers. Each domain is largely autonomous, an island unto itself. So long as the Lord of that domain fulfils its Covenanted oaths and duty to the House, it can be and do whatever it wishes. This allows the Houses to appoint mortal, angelic or even damned Lords.

Noble Ranks

All Nine Houses share the same system of ranks. Even independent demons mostly use these ranks, although cases of independents claiming far higher status than they can really justify are common.

NOBLE RANKS

Rank	Appointed By	Minimum Level	Minimum House Mutations	Experience Bonus	Noble Mutations
Demon	—	1	0	0	0
Housefellow	Captain	1	1	300	0
Devil	Captain	3	1	1,000	0
Daemon	Captain	4	1	2,000	1
Captain	Baron	5	1	3,000	2
Lord	—	7	—	5,000	+1
Baron	Viscount	7	2	4,000	3
Viscount	Earl	10	2	5,000	4
Earl	Duke	12	3	7,000	5
Duke	Head of House	15	3	9,000	6
Grand Duke	Head of House	18	4	12,000	7
Minister	Head of House	20	4	15,000	—
Head of House	—	25	5	20,000	8

The Free Cities have their own hierarchy of ranks and titles, despite their claims to equality and freedom. These are listed in the discussion of the Free Cities society, on page 161.

Appointed By: Who gives the noble that rank. All demons who are spawned into a House are members of that House by default. A character who fulfils the requirements for each rank (see below) can be promoted to that rank by a noble of the listed higher rank. See *Rising in Rank*, below.

Minimum Level: This is not a strict rule, but is very rare for a creature to gain this rank without being of at

least the listed level. When the character's promotion is in question, not having reached this level gives a severe penalty – see below.

Minimum House Mutations: Again, this is not a strict rule, but it is exceedingly difficult for a character to be promoted to that rank without having developed the listed number of House mutations.

Experience Bonus: When a character reaches the listed rank, he immediately gains bonus experience points. A character can only get this bonus once for each rank – a character who becomes a baron, then loses his barony, then gains another barony does not gain another experience bonus until it reaches the rank of Viscount.

Noble Mutations: The number of noble mutations the character gains. These are special mutation chains that stem from the character's noble rank. Some noble mutations are connected to a specific House, others are universal. See below for the rules covering noble mutations.

Demon

A character of Demon rank is a member of the ordinary rank and file of the House. Most demons go through their entire existences without advancing beyond this rank. Demon is only ever referred to as a rank in formal

Rising in Rank

Full rules for the political game are in *Book of the Conqueror*.

The short version; characters who are eligible to rise in rank make Influencing checks, modified by the values listed after each rank. The character who succeeds by the greatest margin wins the domain. If no-one gets an Influence check result higher than 0, then the domain goes unclaimed in this round of negotiations, and the suzerain of the domain will not make a decision for another few weeks or more.

Some universal modifiers apply to these Influencing checks, regardless of the rank being sought:

- ⊗ $-\frac{1}{2}$ the level of the highest-level rival *at the start of this round of claims*.
- ⊗ -2 per rival beyond the first.

situations; mostly, hellkin of this rank are just called unranked, base or common demons.

A character needs no holdings or special mutations to hold the rank of demon. Creatures adopted into a House gain the rank of Demon – faustians automatically hold this rank by ancient tradition (to save new sorcerers and demons from the bother of having the sorcerer prove his power by summoning and binding a few demons).

Claiming Demon Rank:

⊗ No modifiers.

Housefellow

Housefellow is a largely honorary rank, marking the demon's development of the House mutation. It shows that the demon truly crawled out of the House's spawning pits and is not a spy or bastard from another House. Becoming a Housefellow is a confirmation of the demon's status and is an occasion for rowdy celebration among younger demons, (female demons are sometimes called Housesisters instead). After that initial celebration, a demon's status as Housefellow is generally mentioned only in the most formal situations; becoming a Housefellow really is not much of an accomplishment.

As the title can only be granted by a Captain, most Lords use the lure of Housefellow status to test and motivate younger demons. The boost in power and prestige granted by the title is easy to acquire, so long as the young demon fulfils some minor boon for its Captain. Housefellow status is the carrot to Dissolution's stick when it comes to getting some work out of younger demons.

A character needs nothing save the first link in the House mutation chain and the acknowledgement of a Captain in that House to gain the title of Housefellow.

Claiming Housefellow Rank:

⊗ No Modifiers

Devil

By tradition, the title of Devil was gained when a demon made a Covenant with a mortal or a damned soul, gaining exclusive rights to extract iliaster from that soul. It marked the demon as being of independent means and of good standing within the House. The

Adoption into a House

A character can be adopted into a House by a Viscount or higher. The Viscount or one of its retinue must possess the Chain of Usury (if the adoptee is a mortal, angel or demon) or be able to soulshape (for adopted damned) so the adoptee can be marked with the symbol of the House. The adoptee must swear fealty to the House and offer a Covenant of twice the normal Strength to the Viscount (base Covenant Strengths for House-born characters are listed in the character types chapter of *Book of the Damned*).

An adopted character does not gain access to the House mutation chain. He does, however, gain access to the House's noble mutations.

days of buying and selling individual souls are long gone; only rare and wealthy nobles have a personal stock of souls, and the rest purchase their iliaster from the House coffers like every other demon. The title of Devil is now granted to a demon who has excelled in some fashion; like the title of Housefellow, it is used by cunning Lords to force lesser demons to perform some quest or service, but whereas Housefellow is little more than a formality, to be accounted a Devil a demon must do something extraordinary.

Devil status is commonly given for feats such as defeating another Devil in combat or binding it in a Covenant, capturing ten souls for the House, heroism or impressive treachery in battle, mastering sorcery and so on. In the House armies, Devils are given command of lesser demons – a half-dozen or so Housefellows and Demons are placed under one Devil.

Claiming Devil Rank:

- ⊗ Act injured or embarrassed a rival of the suzerain: +6
- ⊗ Act won iliaster or wealth for the suzerain: +1 per 10 crowns
- ⊗ Act defeated rival demons or foes: +1 per 5 levels or Hit Dice

Daemon

Daemon is the highest 'common' title; above this rank, the demon is accounted one of the nobility. Daemon is a term of respect and even fear; to become a Daemon, the demon must be a dangerous foe or master of some art or skill. A Daemon of war would be a notably skilled fighter; a Daemon of the Courts would be a masterful diplomat or spy and so on.

What Do The Common Demons Do?

The average demon, of course, never advances up the feudal hierarchy. Some never advance beyond 1st level – the choice that must be made is between power and being confident of having enough iliaster. Rising in level puts the demon at considerably greater risk of Dissolution – its daily iliaster requirement *doubles* from level one to two. Becoming a Housefellow is enough for many hellkin.

Such common demons find some craft or trade to raise the money they need for their daily iliaster. Working in the forges or fields, overseeing slaves, running a torture palace, entertainers and courtesans, working as a footman or servant in some Lord's fortress – for many demons, daily life is not wholly unlike life in the mortal world. The demons scrape enough coin together to buy plasmic iliaster in the troughs, or even a spawn-meat meal once a week. Holidays are celebrated with a rare bottle of Agony.

The dream of such lowly demons is to one day acquire their own soul. A privately held soul is a source of great prestige, not to mention iliaster. Having a soul frees the demon from complete reliance on the local House torture palace. With this saving, the demon can turn a profit and rise in station, perhaps even rising in level with its added ability to purchase iliaster.

The House armies are a quicker but more dangerous route to power. Demons in the army get their ration of iliaster for free, but they also get thrown into battle against other House armies, abhorei raids, Early raids, Brokenlander incursions and worse dangers.

To become a Daemon, a character need only claim local pre-eminence in a particular field (by tradition, a Daemon is the best at a particular task from among those who attend a given mill (see sidebar), but this definition is thoroughly archaic). The character informs a local Captain of his claim, and the Captain informs other demons of similar skill. If the would-be Daemon can defeat any of these others in a duel of the given type should they challenge him, then his status as Daemon is confirmed. In outlying areas, a character might have to fight only a single duel to win Daemon status; in heavily populated cities and estates, there might be dozens of equally skilled demons nearby and the duels could go on for weeks if the character fights them all.

Claiming Daemon Rank:

- ⊗ +1 per 3 ranks in highest skill
- ⊗ +1 per +1 base attack bonus
- ⊗ +3 per mutation, +2 per feat

Captain

To become a Captain, a demon must have its own host of warriors ready to fight for its Lord. The definition of a host varies from House to House, but generally having fifty or so demons (or being able to fight as well as fifty demons) makes a demon eligible for Captaincy. Alternatively, a demon could just hire mercenaries as a temporary host to gain the title or

even just pay a baron the equivalent amount of iliaster or coin.

In times of war, a Captain is expected to provide these troops to its Lord if ordered to and to lead them into battle. In practice, even the most warlike Lord cannot expect more than a fraction of its Captains to send a full host to a muster; outside of the disciplined legions of Sturrach and Haimon, most mustered hellish armies are rag-tag bands of monsters who spend as much time quarrelling with each other as they do eating the enemy. A wise Lord, therefore, has a few Captains of its Hosts who will provide reliable troops, and uses other Captaincies for political or economic gain.

To become a Captain, the character must arrive at a baron's fortress with a host of at least fifty levels worth of demons. This host must be ready to fight, but need not be a permanent retinue of the would-be captain.

Claiming Captain Rank:

- ⊗ +1 per two ranks of Warcraft
- ⊗ +1 per three ranks of Intimidation
- ⊗ +2 x Charisma modifier
- ⊗ +1 per +1 base attack bonus
- ⊗ Not having enough followers: -2 per missing level of follower
- ⊗ Extra Followers: +1 per extra level
- ⊗ Good Equipment: +5 if all followers are armed and armoured

Lord

The title of Lord is thrown around in the Infernum with great abandon. Some use it to refer to the Heads of the Houses, or any significant noble. Others apply it to the nobles as a whole, or even to any hellkin who is not obviously starving or enslaved. The true meaning of the title in Hell, however, is that a Lord must possess a fortress that guards it against hostile sorcery. Any demon who has a fortress – even a part share in a petty hidden shrine – can claim the title Lord, although the experience bonus is divided among all those sharing in the fortress if the fortress is divided among several demons.

The title of Lord is not granted by any power or noble; it is simply claimed with the fortress. A demon can go from commoner to Lord in a single bound, if it constructs or conquers a fortress.

Claiming Lord Rank:

⊗ No modifiers.

The Mills of Hell

The tradition of the local mill has died out in most regions of Hell, but is still encountered in isolated places. Once, every demon had its own collection of damned souls that it tortured for iliaster. However, it soon became apparent that having one demon craftsman – usually a slaver – do the torturing in exchange for pay was much more efficient than every demon causing pain and suffering at home. Soon, every district had its own torture mill. A demon would bring a fresh soul to the mill and pay for it to be ground into iliaster. The demon would pay a fraction of this iliaster to the millers and consume the rest. The mills became meeting places, social gatherings and duelling grounds for the hellkin. The catchment area of a mill became known as a millfetch, which still survives as an archaic method of land measurement in Hell. A barony was made up of nine or more millfetches.

The mills are gone now, replaced by House-controlled torture palaces. The main vestige of the tradition is the title of Daemon.



Baron

A Baron of Hell rules a domain, unsurprisingly called a barony. A barony is generally about thirty miles in length, although the size varies depending on how far up or down the Pit the domain is. Upper Hell domains encompass many miles of emptiness, while lower domains tend to be much smaller but also far wealthier.

A Baron must provide troops and iliaster for its feudal master, a Viscount. The amount of iliaster varies (see *Book of the Conqueror* for domain management rules). At this level and above, the demon's ability to prove its claim to a title is limited; baronies and higher ranks are granted as a result of political conniving and conspiring, not because a given hellkin can provide any proof of its worth.

Barons are relatively petty nobles, still intimately involved in the affairs of their estates without much scope for action on the grander political landscape. They are concerned primarily with local affairs. Unambitious demons, even powerful ones, never rise beyond the level of Baron – while the demon will never gain much influence, it also avoids the risk of making truly dangerous enemies in the courts.

Infernal Demographics

There are an estimated seventy million demons in the Infernum – that number only includes the hellkin, and not other creatures like the abhorei. Of these, each House numbers over five million demons, of which the vast majority are lowly unranked, Housefellows or Devils.

There are roughly half as many Daemons as Devils, and then only one Captain for every ten Daemons. The numbers drop even more precipitously after that.

The number of damned souls in the Pit can only be estimated, but is probably around a billion (one thousand million). That puts the total at more than ten souls for every demon, but many of these souls have been reduced to useless wastrels.

Industry also consumes a vast amount of iliaster, meaning that many demons go hungry.

Rank	Average Per House	Overall in the Houses
Demon	3,000,000	27,000,000
Housefellow	2,000,000	18,000,000
Devil	500,000	4,500,000
Daemon	250,000	2,250,000
Captain	20,000	180,000
Baron	500	4,500
Viscount	200	1,800
Earl	100	900
Duke	50	450
Grand Duke	18	172
Minister	5	45
Head of House	1	9

Barons do suffer the demands of their overlords. Counts and Dukes are removed from the day-to-day affairs of their subjects, and are often unaware of problems on the ground. A Baron who is ordered to provide fifty thousand crowns worth of iliaster had better do so somehow, even if half the domain's souls are shredded and the coffers just got raided by thieves.

Claiming Baron Rank:

- ⊗ No Fortress: -10
- ⊗ Service to Viscount: +2 per notable act
- ⊗ Per Loyal Captain: +1
- ⊗ No House Mutations: -5

Viscount

Viscounts are the young, arrogant nobility of the demons (as there is almost no inheritance or familial ties due to the custom of using spawning pits to produce new hellkin, there is no familial continuity of leadership; every position is 'earned', not inherited). A Viscount has risen above the common muck and successfully parleyed its barony into a Viscount's domain.

Note that Barons are appointed by Viscounts, just as Viscounts are appointed by Earls. This means that when a Viscount appoints a Baron, it is effectively choosing one of the half-dozen or so nobles that will be competing for its position when it dies. Killing your way up the ranks is a time-honoured tradition in Hell,

Domain Populations

There are around ten thousand domains in the Infernum, the majority of these being petty baronies. Around three-quarters of the hellkin dwell in one domain or another. Therefore, the average domain contains around five thousand demons. Obviously, these figures will be skewed wildly by different domain sizes and populations, but they do provide a workable rule of thumb for domain populations.

Most domains have five times as many souls as they have demons.

The number of angels and mortals in the Pit is negligible – there are less than a million living mortals, and if there are a thousand fallen angels, then most of them must be very good at hiding.

one countered by Covenants and brutal repercussions against assassinations and rebellion. Some demons prefer to appoint incompetent, unambitious underlings as their Barons, but that tends to result in the barony falling into chaos and ruin.

To become a Viscount, there must be an empty Viscounty to take and the character must be of baronial rank. The character does not have to be a Baron who is sworn to the late Viscount; a Baron could be promoted from within another feudal chain, but such indirect moves are somewhat uncommon.

Claiming Viscount Rank:

- ⊗ No Fortress: -10
- ⊗ Per loyal Captain: +2
- ⊗ Service to Earl: +2 per notable act
- ⊗ No House Mutations: -5
- ⊗ Per successful year of ruling barony: +1
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful year of ruling barony: -2
- ⊗ Per successful war: +4
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful war: -8

Earl

The Earls are the established demonic nobility, ruling vast domains from secure fortresses. While few Barons rule for more than a few decades before being replaced, and the turnover of Viscounts is equally bloody, the death of an Earl is a rare and catastrophic event. The earldoms are the heartlands of the Houses, and an attack on an earldom is damaging to the whole House.

Some earldoms contain cities, where the Earl is the undisputed ruler and first citizen of the whole urban sprawl. Other earldoms are vast estates containing

thousands of souls and great mines or torture palaces. The earldoms contain the wealth and economic strongholds of the Houses.

Like Viscounts, Earls are appointed by the next noble up the chain. As Dukes are creatures of surpassing might, few Earls advance beyond this stage. On the battlefield, Earls lead whole brigades of demons into war – or, at least, their champions do, as many Earls would never dare risk their royal personages in combat.

Claiming Earl Rank:

- ⊗ No Fortress: -20
- ⊗ No House Mutations: -5
- ⊗ Service to Duke: +2 per notable act
- ⊗ Per loyal Baron: +4
- ⊗ Per successful year of ruling Viscount: +1
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful year of ruling viscounty: -2
- ⊗ Per successful war: +4
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful war: -8

Duke

The Dukes of Hell are, considered as a whole, perhaps the single most powerful group in Hell. The jump in power and influence from earldom to duchy is a considerable one. The duchies are similarly wealthy and powerful, each one containing some unique treasure or strongpoint that is vital to the House. The Dukes are wealthy enough to maintain personal standing armies or sorcerers; they can afford to have abstruse interests or pursue obscure projects. While a Viscount will generally be behind a baroque political ploy, Dukes fund the bizarre grand designs of science, sorcery or slaughter. The Zethu attempt to control hellgouts was the brainchild of a Duke, for example.

On Inheritance

Conventional inheritance does exist within the Infernum; if a demon has a child, then that child can claim its parent's domain. This is because under infernal law, a child counts as an extension of the parent, part of the same legal entity and so able to assume the parent's throne. It is still possible for the parent's feudal master to disbar the child from taking its parent's place on some technicality or other, but half-demons do often manage to inherit their parent's estate (which adds to their existing unpopularity among full-demons).

For those not fortunate enough to be an ichor-descendant of the late master of a domain, the estates the new demon Lord inherits may be quite different. The size and shape of a domain is often changed by its feudal suzerain when it is between Lords. Baronial and viscounty domains are regularly changed; the shape and size of earldoms or duchies are set and immovable except in the event of post-war reassessments.

While Viscounts or Barons rarely attend court, and Earls attend depending on the court's current location and their current standing, Dukes are always welcome at any court.

A dukedom is the highest rank that can be won in battle. Mercenary warlords and killing machines have strode onto battlefields as commoners and left as Dukes. Dukedom is also the highest rank that have ever been held by mortals (and only one fallen angel has ever climbed here, in the case of the angel Purity, the Riethii).

Claiming Duke Rank:

- ⊗ No Fortress: -20
- ⊗ No House Mutations: -5
- ⊗ Service to House Head: +4 per notable act
- ⊗ Per loyal Viscount: +6
- ⊗ Per successful year of ruling earldom: +1
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful year of ruling earldom: -2
- ⊗ Per successful war: +4
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful war: -8

Grand Duke

The Grand Dukes are the greatest nobility in the Houses. The chief difference between a common Duke and a Grand Duke is that a Grand Duke has been publicly proclaimed so by the Head of the House. Recognition of a Grand Duke comes only when the noble has performed some act so glorious or terrible that it has exalted itself far above the rest. The creation of a Grand Duke is a rare event – the last Grand Duke to be created (outside of House Lictat) was Grand Duke Umano of House Oblurrott, Keeper of the Bridge of Nine Knives, who masterminded their invasion of the Sturrach territories clockwise of Golgotha on the Fifth Circle.

The death of a Grand Duke is another major event in the Pit. Each grand duchy includes some prize – a city, a bridge, a great fortress – that is granted to the new Grand Duke. The moment a Grand Duke breathes its last, the scramble for that prize begins. Unlike the other feudal positions, there is no pressing need to replace a Grand Duke – its domain can be taken by a mere Duke, after all. If some Duke or other can do something spectacular enough to impress the Head of House, it can claim the prize and the title of Grand Duke. Should the prize revert to the Head of House, it can sit in its possession for decades.

Claiming Grand Duke Rank:

- ⊗ Enemy destroyed: +1 per 100 Hit Dice
- ⊗ Enemy Nobles Slain: +¼ level of enemy for Captain, ½ level for Baron, equal level for others

- ⊗ Treasure Captured: +1 per 10,000 crowns
- ⊗ Souls Captured: +1 per 100 souls
- ⊗ Per successful year of ruling dukedom: +1
- ⊗ Per unsuccessful year of ruling dukedom: -2

Minister

The Ministers run the affairs of the House. Depending on how organised the House is, it will have a number of Ministers varying from five to ten. Each ministry has a tower or other rooms within the House citadel on the Eighth, as well as a fortress or other stronghold on the House estates where the duties of the Minister can be carried out. Each ministry carries a stipend, paid from the House coffers, but the Minister itself is responsible for ensuring that the duties of the ministry are carried out. Some ministries are little more than sinecures, others are death traps.

Ministers are appointed by the Head of House; the appointment can be declined, but doing so is an admission of weakness and ensures the Duke will be attacked by avaricious neighbours (the Ministers are almost always appointed from the ranks of Dukes and Grand Dukes, although especially skilled Earls or even Viscounts have been chosen in the past).

Claiming Minister Rank:

- ⊗ +1 per 3 ranks in highest skill
- ⊗ +3 per mutation, +2 per feat

Head of House

Nine Houses. Nine Great Lords, the Princes of the Pit. In time, one of them might claim the empty throne of Lucifer in Pandemonium and become King of Hell, but until then, they strive and quarrel and plot. The Head of the House is the undisputed master of everything the House possesses, every demon and

Wars between Domains

Battles between Barons or other nobles within the same House are common. In general, these wars take place between nobles from different feudal chains; a Baron would not attack another Baron or a Viscount that owes allegiance to the same Earl as itself, but could freely attack nobles who serve a different Earl. As long as a given noble can fulfil its feudal obligations, these wars are tolerated.

soul that bears the House brand and everything within their estates.

It is rare for a Head of House to be destroyed by rival Houses; assassinations are far more common. Still, to become Head of House, the demon must be of surpassing power and cunning; no creature with a trace of weakness or mercy will ever ascend this high in Hell.

Claiming Head of House Rank:

⊗ Last Demon Standing

Noble Mutations

In Hell, nobility is not a matter of blood or honour. It is a matter of power. The Houses are engines of conquest and control; iliaster flows through them just as much as it flows through a demon's veins or a war machine's components. When a demon claims a domain, it taps into the iliaster than runs through that land. This allows the demon to develop noble mutations; special mutations born of the demon's connection with Hell itself.

It is possible to develop these mutations without a fortress, but it is rare; the demon must remain within its domain while still riding its borders regularly, to maintain its link with the land. Noble mutations are extra mutations; the demon develops them naturally, without having to select them with chosen mutation slots (or feats, in the case of non-demons). The number of noble mutations available to a character varies depending on its rank – see the Noble Ranks table above. Mortal and angel characters who have become nobles can take these mutations so long as they have a Corruption above 11.

Each House has its own special noble mutations, but some mutations are universally available to all nobles.

Noble Chain of Gender

This single-link chain allows the demon to adopt a gender. It is useless to malcubi, deceivers, mortals and angels with an existing gender.

Gender (Physical): The demon possesses a gender. It can bear or sire half-demon children on other gendered creatures.

Noble Chain of the Burning Land

The demon ties itself to its domain, becoming increasingly aware of the pattern of its movements and life. The demon's skin changes colour to match the terrain of its home.

I – Hearth and Home (Mental): The demon gains a supernatural awareness of the terrain of its domain. It gains a +4 insight bonus to Knowledge (local) and Survival checks made within the confines of the domain.

II – Domain Awareness (Psychic): By spending one iliaster as a move action, the demon can now get a momentary mental 'snapshot' of its domain. It will pick up major discharges of iliaster and other energies, movement of large numbers of demons and other creatures with an iliaster reserve. While this is by no means accurate enough to detect a particular individual, it does give the demon early warning of invading armies, riots, gatherings and so on.

III – Tied to the Land: The demon can now draw strength from its domain. It gains bonus hit points depending on the size of the domain:

Domain Size	Bonus Hit Points
Barony	+20
Viscount	+40
Earl	+60
Duke	+80
Head of House	+100

IV – Home Ground: Those who trespass in the demon's domain risk their lives, for its abilities are far stronger here at home. It gains a +4 resistance bonus to saving throws, and anyone making saving throws against the demon's abilities suffer a –4 penalty.

Noble Chain of Refined Cruelty

This chain is a popular method for demons to display their rank and mastery over lesser beings.

I – Touch of Agony: By touching a foe and spending two iliaster, the demon can cause that creature to suffer almost unbearable agony. The target suffers a –4 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks and saving throws for 2d6 rounds. This victim is permitted a Will save to halve both the penalty and the duration.

II – Bonds of Crackling Lightning (Electrical): The demon may target any creature within sight that owes it a Covenanted debt. By spending one iliaster as an

attack action, the demon can cause that Covenanted bond to manifest as crackling chains of lightning. The target is permitted a Fortitude save to resist this effect, but the DC is increased by the Strength of the Covenant. If the saving throw is failed, the demon takes electrical damage equal to the Strength of the Covenant.

III – Feed on Suffering: The demon Lord can now feed on the torment and suffering of those around it. It gains a +4 bonus to any one ability score as long as a creature is being tortured within 100 feet of it and it is in its domain. If there is no creature being tortured within range, then the ability score bonus is lost and cannot be re-established for 24 hours.

Noble Chain of the Iron Fist

The Iron Fist Chain gives the demon the power to grind its servants into the dust. It translates the demon's nobility into vicious, crushing power. As the demon develops this link, its fists do indeed transmute into a grey material that is hard as steel.

I – Drive the Dogs Onward: The demon exudes an aura that is two parts nobility to three parts terror.



combat. Any sworn followers of the demon gain a +2 morale bonus to all attack rolls while within 30 feet of the demon. Furthermore, as a move action, the demon may spend one iliaster to increase the range of this mutation by 10 feet. Any amount of iliaster may be used when activating this mutation.

This link carries a drawback; the demon is filled with an instinctive rage and cruelty during combat. If an allied creature rolls a 1 on an attack roll or saving throw while within range of the Drive the Dogs Onward mutation, then the demon must attack him for at least 1d6 rounds after the battle is over unless the unfortunate failure makes a successful Grovelling check against a DC of 10 + ½ the demon's Hit Dice plus its Constitution modifier.

II – Feed My Soul: If the demon drops a foe in combat while in its domain, it instantly gains 2d6 iliaster.

III – Hammer of your Betters: The demon must spend three iliaster as an attack action to activate this mutation for 10 minutes. While within the confines of its own domain, it gets a bonus to attack rolls against creatures of lesser rank than itself. The size of the bonus varies depending on the difference in rank between the demon and the other creature; the demon gets a +1 to its attack rolls for every level of difference, as charted on the table below:

1. Demon	6. Baron
2. Housefellow	7. Viscount
3. Devil	8. Earl
4. Daemon	9. Duke
5. Captain	10. Head of House

The demon only gets this bonus when attacking a creature who is part of the Infernum – i.e. a demon of one of the Houses, of a lesser House, or an independent or mercenary who will obeys the laws of Hell. It does not function against Free City demons, mortals other than faustians and other adopted creatures, most fallen angels, abhorei and other non-Infernal creatures.

Noble Chain of the Spider Dance

The Spider Dance Chain attunes the demon to politics within its domain.

I – Perceive the Chains (Psychic): By spending one iliaster, the demon can see Covenants for one round. It perceives these as glowing chains surrounding other creatures. It can judge the rough Strengths and numbers of these Covenants. If the demon

concentrates on a particular individual, it can see where the chains go – i.e. the rough direction to the holder of those Covenants.

II – Vibrations on the Web (Psychic): The demon gains a +4 insight bonus to Sense Motive checks while within its domain, as well as a +2 insight bonus to Diplomacy and Seduction checks.

III – Tightening the Chains: The demon may now boost the effective Strength of Covenants within its domain by spending iliaster as a swift action. Each point of iliaster spent boosts the Strength of the Covenant by +3 for one round.

Noble Chain of the Screaming Sky

This chain allows the demon to control the weather patterns within its domain.

I – Mark of the Lord: When this link manifests, the demon may choose the overall weather patterns within its domain. These weather patterns do not significantly affect travel within the domain, but do create a constant overhanging pall in the land.

Furthermore, the corruption of the land increases significantly; add one-third the Lord's level to the land's general Sin Rating.

II.I – Miasma: Icy fogs are now constantly present in the domain; visibility is reduced to a maximum of 100 + 1d10 x 20 feet. The demon can spend five iliaster as a move action to lift the miasma for one day.

II.II – Scorching Sun: The heat in the domain during the day is enough to force a Fortitude save (DC 15) to resist damage from the heat each hour (see Exposure, page 154 in *Book of the Damned*). Furthermore, the domain is in daylight and false daylight for a number of extra hours equal to the demon's Charisma modifier (subtract the demon's Charisma modifier first from the Witching time of the domain, then from the night time).

II.III – Icy Winds: The cold in the domain during the night is enough to force a Fortitude save (DC 15) to resist damage from the cold each hour (see Exposure, page 154 in *Book of the Damned*). Furthermore, the swirling winds reduce all flying movement by one-third and decrease manoeuvrability by one category.

II.IV – Pall of Night: The domain is oppressively dark; all creatures suffer a –1 penalty to Will saves while within the domain. Furthermore, subtract

the demon's Charisma modifier from the hours of daylight, as the night lingers longer here.

III.I – Choking Swamp Lord: The ground becomes incredibly muddy. Reduce all land movement by 10 feet throughout the domain except on roads and other structures. Fogs reduce visibility to 1d6 x 10 feet throughout the domain.

III.II – Volcano Lord: When this link is chosen, the demon Lord may cause a number of volcanoes equal to its Charisma modifier to manifest within its domain. The heat is sufficient to force Fortitude saves every hour at night, and every 10 minutes during the day.

III.III – Glacier Lord: When this link is chosen, the demon Lord may cause a number of glaciers equal to its Charisma modifier to manifest within its domain. The cold is sufficient to force Fortitude saves every hour during the day and every 10 minutes at night.

III.IV – Lord of the Sunless Realm: There is no sunlight within the realm. The penalty to all Will saves is increased to –2.

House Astyanath

Cruelty is not a vice, nor a necessity. It is a vocation. There is nothing more intimate nor more engaging than the art of inflicting pain. The Astyanath must know its victim, care for it, love it; it must know what stimulus or tool will bring it to the blinding pain where time extends into a single perfect moment of unutterable agony, where consciousness contracts until the victim cannot think nor remember anything except the pain and its tormentor.

Hell was once like that in its entirety, it was one single moment of eternal pain. It is our vocation to honour that heritage.

History

The glorious and noble House Astyanath, most refined and civilised of all the Nine, was founded on treachery and murder. The founder Astyanath was a beast of great intellect and greater cruelty. It discovered how to extract iliaster from damned souls, as well as many of the secrets of mutation. Before the rebellion, Astyanath was in charge of the spawning pits where new demon breeds were created, blended and aborted.

During the chaotic period after the angels were banished, Astyanath entered into the service of a

demon Lord. This Lord was on a par with any of the other Founders, and carved out an empire equal to that of a great House. Despite its power, that demon's name appears in none of the histories or rosters of the hellkin – partially a testament to the House's mastery of politics and lies, but also a clue to the demon's fate. Through its connections to its sibling Zethu, Astyanath mastered sorcery long before it was known in the rest of the Pit, and bound its master's power to its own.

With this betrayal, Astyanath gained control over much of the Seventh Circle. While the beast was forced to yield parts of this domain to Riethii and Jelac, it was able to extract political concessions for territory instead of losing it to simple conquest. House Astyanath has always been among the most politically adept of the Houses. The Astyanath are taught to aspire to excellence in all things, to be utterly ruthless and to delight in cruelty.

The beast's followers proved they absorbed these lessons well. At the Bileflot Conclave, Sturrach slew Astyanath. The nobles of this House protested this insult, but privately each one delighted in its rise in fortune. An Astyanath must not be beholden or

strength and purpose. This arrogance makes Astyanath politics uniquely bloody – the other Houses accept the hierarchy of Barons, Viscounts, Earls, Dukes and so on, but every position in House Astyanath is fought for. Back in the time just after the Founder's murder, these positions were contested by force of arms, but in modern times duels and political machinations have replaced open warfare as the chosen tools of House Astyanath.

The Astyanaths entered the war only when Sturrach invaded their borders, and quickly came to arrangements with both their Riethii allies and the invaders. House Riethii may have the reputation of lying down and opening their legs when attacked, but it is House Astyanath who has truly mastered the art of the graceful withdrawal and riposte. Patience is another virtue prized by the Cruel House, a patience that was rewarded centuries after the Sturrach invasion when sorcerers bound and destroyed the occupiers.

This invasion – not to mention the irritatingly regular attacks on the Cruel One's holdings by moralistic Branded, Benandanti or angels – means that House Astyanath has by far the smallest army of all the Houses. Instead of the vast hordes of Sturrach or Haimon, the Cruel House prefers small, swift and highly skilled units. An Astyanath army may be outnumbered ten-to-one, but each of its warriors is worth twenty lesser demons – or so the Astyanath claim.

Sturrach's War ended in the Upper Circles, far from the Astyanath holdings on the Seventh. The centuries since then have been a glorious time for the Cruel House. A renewed alliance with Riethii and Zethu has placed the House among the most powerful in the Infernum. Vast wealth flows from its astonishingly efficient torture palaces, and the House numbers some of the best sorcerers, duellists, assassins and diplomats amongst its demons. There is nothing a scion of House Astyanath cannot achieve if its desire is strong and its spirit ruthless enough.

Current Standing

'The Astyanath? Charming folk, the best of the hellkin. Unless of course they own you, in which case you'd best be working out a way to kill yourself right quick.'

House Astyanath is perhaps the most politically powerful House; it is allied with the Riethiis through the Rose Accord, and with Zethu by ancient bonds of kinship. The Carthenays respect the Astyanath's ruthlessness, the Haimon their learning and even the Sturrach grudgingly acknowledge that an Astyanath



swordsman or duellist can handle a blade. Oblurott and Astyanath are almost like mirror images of each other – excess and restraint, pleasure and pain, indolence against tireless effort – which makes their hatred of each other understandable. Glabretch considers Astyanath a threat, and the Cruel House are always quick to remind members of House Lictat of their second-class status.

Despite their opposition to the latter three Houses, being able to unite the other five in common cause would make Astyanath kingmaker in any claim on the throne – if House Astyanath was ever able to unite itself. The House has more internal conflict and assassinations than any other. Loyalty is a trait long since bred out of the Cruel demons.

Economically, the House is in a surprisingly strong position. While it lacks any significant industry or mining concerns, the relatively small number of Astyanath in the military means that the House has far more demons engaged in crafts and artistry. Astyanath torturers, artists and sages are employed all over the Infernum. The House is renowned for the quality of its workmanship, especially in the field of torture devices.

The House also has an edge in iliaster production, thanks to the sheer efficiency of its torturers. Much of this iliaster is in the form of Agony and Sorrow, for which the Astyanath are famed. The vineyards make up a significant portion of the House's Seventh Circle holdings.

Every demon has heard tales of the Astyanath Joyous Legion, who know no pain and delight in death, or of Astyanath duellists who are unbeatable in single combat. These tales are largely true, but their lack of numbers means that House Astyanath has trouble defending its own borders from raids, let alone conquering lands beyond. The House's holdings have not expanded at all in the last century; indeed, many would point to Astyanath's history as being a long slow decline from the heights of its original extent.

To keep the damned slaves and common demons in line, the Astyanath employ shockingly excessive repercussions to the most minor infractions of duty. An Astyanath Lord rules by fear, not force of arms.

Culture and Customs

The Astyanath expect perfection from their demons. As soon as a demon shows an aptitude for a particular field of study – combat, sorcery and torture being the most common – it is thrust into a special school

where it is expected to master that field as quickly as possible. Failure is punished once by torture, a second time by Covenanting, a third by expulsion. Few complete this initial education, leading to the existence of an underclass of failed Astyanath denied advancement in the House.

The Astyanath are ruthless and cruel. Their society is not based around the principle of 'survival of the fittest' – it is based around trapping and tormenting others. An Astyanath who succeeds becomes a target for its peers; one who fails becomes a despised pariah or a plaything to be tortured. That this practice establishes who is the strongest is a side benefit; the Astyanath are far more interested in winnowing out and breaking the weak.

At the same time, the Astyanath are arrogant and expect ostentation and audacity from their members. A scion of the Astyanath must expose itself to dangers, be they social or physical, and defeat them. Cowards do not thrive among the Astyanath (retreat and fleeing are perfectly valid options, as the Astyanath view honour and justice as weaknesses to be exploited, but a retreat must be matched with a riposte that destroys the attacker).

One of the lesser-known Astyanath skills is the art of surgery and flesh manipulation; in this, they are second only to the Glabretchi. This skill was stolen from the abhorei, but the Astyanath have adapted it for use on demons. This House created devices like the implanted iliaster reserve, and are also extremely skilled at body modification like tattooing and piercing. Many Astyanath wear rings or spikes running through their flesh, which are often charged with sorcerous energy. This also makes the Astyanath one of the better Houses for healing, although Riethii and Glabretch both have skills in this field too.

Duelling is the chosen sport of the Astyanath. The House maintains the great Theatre of Knives, but every domain has at least one duelling arena. Betting is a common diversion and most nobles have their own stable of champions and gladiators for the arenas.

Astyanath parties are infamous. Unlike the orgies of House Riethii or the staid formal balls of Carthenay, the Astyanath gatherings are immensely entertaining and enjoyable – if the guest can cope with the vicious gossiping, betrayals and political plays that accompany these events. An Astyanath's verbal barbs can be as cruel as any whip and far more damaging to a demon's reputation. Once the Agony starts flowing, the parties tend towards wildness and excess, with guests being flayed alive by eager demons.

Holdings

The Astyanath holdings are almost exclusively on the Seventh, from the banks of the Styx near Cacaphractus to Lake Inferno and the Wood of Suicides. This is some of the finest and most heavily tended land in the whole Pit; the Astyanath domains tend to be small but highly profitable. There are relatively few Astyanath nobles; the House has slightly over half the average number of domains, so the competition for these holdings is fierce. The dukedoms of the Astyanath, however, are considerably larger and richer than average, extending over hundreds of square miles and containing several torture palaces and vineyards.

The largest of the estates, surrounded by a great field of razor-sharp hellglass, contains the seat of the House Prince, Chateau Malaise. It is one of the most beautiful fortresses in the Pit, but is relatively small for a House fortress. This is a result of the infighting following Astyanath's death; there were three claimants for the throne, and each of these claimants essentially formed a branch of the family within House Astyanath. Even today, when all three claimants are long dead, this division lingers on.

The wealth that should have been lavished on Chateau Malaise has instead gone into the three Duchies that are the heart of each branch. The Grand Duchy of the Stygian Wall, held by the Stygian Faction and ruled by Grand Duke Urezo, is located along the banks of the Styx close to the forbidden city of Cacaphractus. Urezo is an artificer of great skill; most artificers are quiet, sullen creatures, but Urezo is charming, outgoing and beautiful. He has made a golden statue in the shape of a handsome mortal, and uses his artificer powers to possess it. The Stygian Faction is the weakest of the three politically – beyond Urezo and his immediate vassals, it has no Lords of great importance who rank higher than Viscounts. It does have considerable sway in the fields of sorcery and science; much of the latter comes from the Duchy's traditional links with Cacaphractus. The Stygians maintain the wall to defend against aggression from beyond the Pit; without control of the Joyous Legion, they rely on mercenaries and siege weapons. The Stygians also control most of the House's holdings beyond the Seventh, such as the mines on the Fourth Circle or the Asylum which is used to provide test subjects for Astyanath experiments.

The section faction's home is the Grand Duchy of the Silence in the foothills of the Malebolge. This grim and foreboding terrain is under the effect of a

sorcerous enchantment; the shadows here swallow noise as effectively as the thickest drape curtain, muffling the screams and cries of agony. It is here that the torturers of the Astyanath are trained. This is also the home of the Joyous Legion and the House sorcerers and breeding pits. This faction is referred to as the Quiescence. The current master of this faction is one of the few hulks in House Astyanath, Wroth. It is the commander of the Joyous Legion and seems to have little interest in the throne.

The Grand Duchy of Thornhold is nestled among the vineyards in the heart of the Astyanath territory, close to Chateau Malaise. The Thornholders are by far the wealthiest of the three factions, and perhaps the most powerful. The current head of the Thornholder faction is also the Head of the House, and she has placed her Dukes into the positions of influence within the Astyanath. The Thornholders are closely allied with the Riethii.

The Citadel Astyanath, also called Chainwheel, in the Malebolge is described on page 87.

Notable Members

The Head of House Astyanath is called the Mother of Tears in addition to her other titles. She is a succubus by the name of Irania. She is the fifth Head of House Astyanath; before her were Astyanath itself, Rishac, Satamon of the Rose and the Queen of Blades. The demon who referred to herself as Queen of Blades was a former duellist who created the infamous Theatre of Knives. She won her barony in a wager and slaughtered her way up the ranks.

Irania, the Astyanath

Irania took the throne from the Queen of Blades in a bloodless coup – she poisoned her predecessor. In truth, the demoness has little interest in ruling her House, and spends most of her time indulging in greater parties and celebrations than the House has seen since Satamon's day. It is only the taciturn approval of Wroth and the relative weakness of the Stygian Faction that has allowed Irania to continue without a challenge to her reign; she has been severely criticised for not doing more to deal with the Free City heresy.

She is known to despise House Lictat even more than the Oathbreakers, however. Any members of House Lictat caught in Thornholder land are executed – or brought to Irania's bed, which is tantamount to a death sentence. She has both the thorny skin of the Astyanath and the life-draining traits of the succubi,

which give her the nickname of the Black Widow – no bed-mate of hers has ever lived through the night.

Baron Flint

One of the many minor sadists of the Astyanath Hierarchy, the Barony of Flint is near to Chateau Malaise, in the midst of one of the hellglass deposits of the Seventh Circle. Hellglass bears some resemblance to obsidian and some to dried blood, but it is incredibly sharp and painful. The good Baron's fortress stands on a cliff overlooking a pit filled with hellglass spikes, and it amuses itself by hurling prisoners and damned souls down to impale themselves on the glass. The Baron constantly seeks excuses to throw new victims, so serving it can be an eventful but short career. The wealth of Flint does give it considerable sway within the House as a whole and with the Quiescence faction, a group of nobles fascinated by the process and meaning of death in Hell, tangentially allied with the Haimon scholars.

The Baron is of imp stock, but has several Size Increase mutations making it look like a horribly fat winged baby.

Severus the Torturer

One of the most expert torturers within House Astyanath, this slaver has been hired by various nobles to instruct their torturers in the finer arts of agony. Severus is a craftsman of pain, tailoring his techniques to the victim. Through it all, he retains a surprisingly cheery demeanour for a demon.

Noble Mutations

House Astyanath has three noble mutation chains.

Chain of the Joyous Legion

The Joyous Legion chain is developed by demons within the House Astyanath military. Most develop the first link as Captains, to be ready for promotion into the Legion.

I – Improved Pleasure for Pain (Mental): If the demon already has the fourth link in the Astyanath House Chain (Pleasure for Pain), the demon now gains a +3 morale bonus instead of a +2 bonus to all attack rolls and Will saves made within one round of being injured. If the demon does not have the fourth link in the House Chain, this link becomes Pleasure for Pain and the fourth link becomes Improved Pleasure (+3 bonus).

II – Gleeful Carnage (Mental): The demon's

pain now fuels its attacks. It may use the damage it suffered last round as its Strength score for one round by spending one iliaster as a swift action. For example, if the demon suffered 30 points of damage, it could activate this link and gain a Strength score of 30 for one round.

The demon's body warps and mutates while using this link; its blood glows bright red.

III – Prolong the Joy: The demon can now prolong the effects of the first two links in this chain. This costs three iliaster per round. Any amount of iliaster can be spent in a round to activate this link.

IV – Resilience of the Joyous Legion (Physical): The demon becomes better able to deal with pain and grotesque injury. It gains Damage Reduction 5/–.

This link carries a drawback; the demon can no longer ascertain its own physical state. In combat, the Games Master should keep track of the damage suffered by the demon and not inform the Player of how many hit points the character has remaining.

V – General of the Joyous Legion: The demon's ability to cope with pain is complete, allowing it to transmute the agony of others into iliaster. Once per day, the demon can gain iliaster equal to the result of a Torture check or damage roll that occurs within 60 feet of the demon. Activating this mutation is a free action.

Chain of the Thorn Prince

This chain improves on the trademark Astyanath physical trait – the razor-sharp thorns that grow from their skin.

I – The Rending Flesh (Physical): The Astyanath can now make the thorns rip and tear the flesh of others. If the character is in a grapple with a foe, it can spend three iliaster as an attack action to deal 2d6 points of slashing damage to the foe. Up to 15 iliaster can be spent in one round on this mutation.

II.I – Shooting Thorns: The demon can now shoot thorns from its skin. These projectiles have a range increment of 20 feet. The thorns do 1d4 points of damage on a successful hit. A demon has a number of thorn patches equal to 5 + its size modifier. It can fire any number of these thorn patches in a round as a full attack action, but must make a separate attack roll for each one. The thorns count as an automatic weapon. The demon can regrow the thorns once they have been fired, but only once all the patches have

been expended. This costs three iliaster per patch, which must all be paid at once.

II.II – Thorn Chains: The demon can fire thorns from its flesh to a range of 30 feet, which remain connected to its body by fine chains of steel. Firing a thorn requires an attack action, three iliaster and a successful touch attack roll. If the attack hits, the victim suffers one point of piercing damage and must remain within 30 feet of the demon. If the victim (or the demon) wishes to move more than 30 feet away, then the chain must be broken. The chain has an Armour Class of 16, a hardness of 10 and 10 hit points. It has a Break DC of 25. The demon can break its chain as a free action. If the chain is broken by any means, the demon suffers 10 points of damage.

III – Piercing Thorns: The demon can now detach its thorns and leave them to work their way into the victim's flesh. The demon must spend five iliaster when it injures a victim with thorn damage. This activates the thorn. The thorn deals one point of damage every hour to the victim for the first 24 hours, two points every hour in the second 24 hours, three points per hour in the third 24 hours and so on. The thorn can be removed with a successful Heal check (DC equal to $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the demon Hit Dice + the demon's Constitution modifier, +5 per 24 hours after the first). If the Heal check is failed, the victim takes 2d6 damage and the thorn continues to move.

IV – Thorns of the Heart (Psychic, Mind-Affecting): If the demon makes a successful attack on a victim that includes thorn damage, the demon may spend five iliaster. The victim must then make a Will save; if the save is failed, a new Covenant is forcibly created between the two, with the victim owing the demon a debt equal to the amount of damage inflicted.

Chain of Ultimate Pain

Another infamous chain of the Astyanath, this is the highest art of torture.

I – Lingering Pain Aura (Psychic): The demon now projects a psychic aura that makes injuries more painful. Any creature within 30 feet, other than the demon itself, suffers a -2 morale penalty to all actions in the round immediately after taking damage. Furthermore, any Torture checks made within this aura gain a +4 circumstance bonus. Activating this aura costs three iliaster and it lasts for one hour.

II – Agony Inversion: The demon can now gain iliaster through being tortured. Once per day, the demon gains an amount of iliaster equal to the result

of a Torture check performed upon it. The demon may not torture itself, but can order another being to torture it.

This link carries a drawback; the demon becomes addicted to pain; its daily iliaster requirement increases by half again on any day it is not tortured.

III – Painjump (Psychic, Possession): The demon may now attempt to possess any creature that is suffering pain that it can see. The demon must make a Concentration check to activate this mutation; the DC is equal to $20 +$ the target's Hit Dice – a value that depends on the target's current state. This value is equal to the result of the Torture check if the victim is being tortured, or equal to the result of the largest injury suffered by the target if it has lost hit points. Activating this mutation is an attack action and costs five iliaster.

IV – Sympathetic Agonies (Blasphemous): The demon can now transfer pain from one creature to another. The demon may touch any creature and spend seven iliaster; this 'charges' the demon with any ability score damage or morale penalties currently affecting that creature (the pain is 'copied', not transferred). The demon is unaffected by this charge. At any point in the future, the demon may touch another creature and expend this charge. If the touch attack is successful, the victim suffers the morale penalties and ability score damage contained in the charge. The demon must decide it is expending the charge before making the touch attack; if the attack misses, the charge is lost. The demon may only hold one charge at a time.

Secrets of House Astyanath

Every one of the Great Houses has their own secrets; the Astyanath are no exception.

Knife Children

The Astyanath have been breeding mortals in an isolated dungeon for centuries. These mortals are tortured almost from birth and kept in constant pain. They are surgically augmented and trained in combat even while being subjected to agony, but are carefully kept from Corruption using cleansing rituals. These nameless mortals are used as suicidal assassins by the Astyanath – as the only time a Knife Child is not being tortured is when it is on a mission, the creatures are utterly dedicated to killing their target. One of the greatest successes of the Knife Children was in infiltrating Citadel Zethu and killing Zethu itself when it had bound Sturrach in 501 AF.



Piercing Rings

These rings are implanted into a demon's body as a reward for services to House Astyanath. The rings magically constrain the iliaster flow within the demon, reducing its iliaster requirement by 10%. Implanting a ring requires a Heal check (DC 20) and causes the demon 3d4 points of permanent hit point damage. The rings also give the demon a +1 bonus to Will saves and increases the Will save DC against the demon's mutations by +1.

A demon can have a maximum of five such rings. Each ring costs 5,000 crowns to design and manufacture, and each one is designed for a specific individual.

Surgical Alterations

House Astyanath has a mastery of surgery far beyond that of the other Houses. Each alteration has a listed Heal DC to install and each inflicts permanent hit point damage on the subject. This damage is suffered even if the Heal check is failed and the alteration is not completed successfully. Common alterations include:

Implanted Claws: Increase the demon's claw damage by one step. Surgery DC 20, Damage 1d4, Cost 50 crowns, requires Exclusivity: Claws

Armour Plating: Adds +4 to the demon's natural Armour Class. Surgery DC 25, Damage 2d4, Cost 100 crowns, requires Exclusivity: Hide

Agony Gland: The gland stores one dose of Agony, releasing it into the demon's ichor-stream on command as a free action. Surgery DC 25, Damage 2d4, Cost 100 crowns.

Sublimation Glands: These glands give the demon an enhanced capacity for drinking Agony, Strain and Sorrow, gaining a +8 resistance bonus to the saving throws required for drinking those hellbroths. Surgery DC 15, Damage 1d4, Cost 25 crowns.

Pain Seers

As the Painjump mutation shows, sufficient agony can bring the mind to a state where it is in tune with other minds in similar pain. The Pain Seers of House Astyanath are a group of demons, damned and mortals who are tortured to gain information. The seer is brought to a perfect height of agony, then made to concentrate on a particular target who is also in great pain. The seer is able to see through that sufferer's eyes, hear what they hear and so on. Damned are the usual target for this; there is almost always a soul being tormented in a given fortress. The information gathered by the Pain Seers is rarely especially coherent, but it is easier to perform than *scrying*.

Demon Recyclers

A relatively simple innovation, these are simply extraction rigs that work on demons. The amount of iliaster extracted is the same as for damned souls, but is drawn from the demon's iliaster reserve and can drive it into Dissolution. A demon recycler costs 10 crowns.

Cacaphractus

The living machine city of Cacaphractus is one of the Infernum's great mysteries. It was created by Astyanath in concert with the angel Azazel, who now leads the Brokenlander angels. The project consumed a great deal of the resources of the early Infernum, but none of the thousands of demons who worked on the city knew what they were making.

It was a secret Astyanath took to the spawning pit with it. Only Azazel remembers they made a machine to torture God.

House Carthenay

Make no mistake; you are property. You have no value save that which we assign to you; no purpose save that what we decide for you. You are chattels of the Carthenay, belongings of the Carthenay. You are

bought and sold and traded as we wish.

It will be better for you if you accept this now, and relinquish whatever erroneous beliefs in your own self-worth or self-determination that still delude you. We shall cause you pain until you become a tool, and the swifter you become a tool, the more value you shall have.

History

The Carthenays have had a long and steady rise to power. They have expanded through every adversity and war. On the profit charts of the House, every line curves upwards as more and more of the Pit comes into their possession.

Their financial empire began with the city of Dis. Before the techniques for extracting iliaster was discovered, the demons had to feed on fallen shards of celestial matter. The first factory constructed in Hell was a monstrous barn of black iron and flowing lava where this Celestine was rendered down into a substance the demons could ingest. The demon Carthenay was set over this great machine called the Echoing Hall, doling out iliaster to the growing hosts of hellkin. When the captured souls began to arrive from the upper reaches of the Pit, they were brought here where demon torturers set to work on them. Carthenay was as powerful and influential as any demon could be under the rule of the Dominions.

When the call came from Pandemonium to hand over the stocks of iliaster, Carthenay was chief among the demons who objected to this decision. Indeed, if it were not for Carthenay, it is unlikely the Dominions would have opposed their Throne masters – the great demon spoke with wise and persuasive words to the angels, convincing them that losing the iliaster would be the end of their independence and hellish pleasures. Calling Carthenay the architect of the rebellion is an exaggeration, but not a large one.

Once the angels had been banished, Carthenay returned to his seat in Dis. Again, his influence proved key in forcing the agreement that Pandemonium be left unoccupied for the moment – he was not ready to move on the throne, so he prevented his rivals from making their own claims. While Carthenay's greed was limitless, he was possessed of great cunning and never over-reached himself (a claim his descendants certainly cannot share). He slowly expanded into the Seventh and Sixth Circles, placing his mercenary forces under the control of his general Sturrach. Carthenay rarely risked confronting one of the other great Houses, preferring to conquer unclaimed but

still valuable territory and gobble up lesser Houses.

This was a calculated bluff on Carthenay's part; by not declaring itself a great House, it passed below the notice of Jelac, Riethii, Oblurott and the other powers of the new Infernum – by the time the other Houses realised the Hoarders' influence, it was too late and Carthenay had strongholds all over the Pit. The focus of the House was on the construction of the great Vaults of Mammon, where Carthenay stored a great quantity of iliaster. With the patience of a spider, Carthenay and his followers grew their domain until it was time to take their place among the Lords of the hellkin.

The only significant loss suffered by Carthenay during this time came in 330 AF, when Zethu stole the growing city of Dis from the House; this insult has never been avenged.

House Carthenay ignored the time of invasions, supporting Sturrach in its bid to unite the Pit only to regain the Hoarders' old alliance with the warrior House. The Bloody Conclave in 341 AF was a failure, but it laid the foundation for the great war. The war began for House Carthenay when Riethii forces encroached on their domains on the Seventh, so a counter-offensive was launched. Thanks to their trade network, the Carthenays knew every road and stronghold in the Pit; thanks to their vast iliaster stocks, they could support Sturrach's blitzkrieg assault on the unprepared Riethii.

Carthenay forces swept in behind the Sturrach offensive, picking the bones and claiming the spoils of victory. Sturrach demons bled and died, but it was the Carthenay who profited from the victories. Still, the House bore the financial cost of the war; harried accountants tallied the price of every hellfire barrage or hulk charge and wept. The war continued for three decades until Carthenay discovered it had won enough. Just as it had done when Pandemonium was contested, the House chose to rein in its greed and consolidate its winnings – indeed, it now controlled over three times as much territory as it had done at the start of the war. Carthenay himself went to Sturrach to end the war.

Why Carthenay chose to do this personally, instead of staying safe within the Vaults of Mammon is a mystery. Honour is not something that Carthenay could ever have been accused of. Perhaps he intended to bind Sturrach somehow. In any case, even though the Great Hoarder took a host of bodyguards with him, he was slain on the banks of the Styx by Sturrach.

The next century is a red stain in the Carthenay ledgers. The House's holdings were conquered by Sturrach with embarrassing ease. The Hoarders were defeated so swiftly that fighting for Carthenay's empty throne was not even an option; the richest nobles in the House agreed on a temporary ruler to avoid a civil war. Through hoarding every Claw and Horn and conserving its armies, the House managed to weather the lean years while Sturrach's armies rampaged over the rest of the Pit. The Carthenays withdrew to a handful of estates and concentrated on keeping their trade links open so that they could rebuild swiftly when the war eventually ended. They invested heavily in shipping.

When the war was finally over, Carthenay's demons leapt back into action. The House rebuilt with great speed and was instrumental in reconstructing the civilisation of the hellkin. For almost every isolated barony and township, their first contact with the larger Pit was through Carthenay trade caravans. The House entered into a partnership with their old enemies in House Zethu to build a train network throughout the Pit. Souls could now be whisked at high speed from the fields of the First to the new torture palaces of the Sixth in a matter of days instead of years.

During this period of reconstruction, House Sturrach were pariahs in the Pit. It was the Carthenays who first reached out to the Bloody House, funding their reconstruction and providing them with iliaster to ward off famines. This was not an act of charity; the Hoarders extracted such potent Covenants that House Sturrach was once again reduced to the junior partner in any alliances.

Today, Carthenay has rebuilt its influence if not its domain to the heights it knew during the war. The patience of the Hoarders has almost paid off...

Current Standing

House Carthenay is one of the stronger Houses of the Pit. Its financial situation has always been grotesquely healthy; the Vaults of Mammon are packed full of iliaster and the House controls more property and cities than any other. Much of the wealth of the House is in Covenants; there are few demons who are wholly free of debt to the Hoarders.

Politically, House Carthenay has always been the silent partner in many alliances in the Pit. Every House except Glabretch and Lictat will deal with the Carthenays, although one thing the Carthenay cannot be called is popular. Building alliances is fraught with paranoia and dislike of the Hoarders, and often

House Carthenay must lubricate the deal with cash before the other party will agree.

The military of House Carthenay has always been underestimated. They are certainly far from numerous, but are stalwart defenders of the House estates. The House armies are almost exclusively defensive forces; a few are mobile enough to travel with trade caravans or the Minotaur, but most invasions require the hiring of large numbers of mercenaries.

Culture and Customs

House Carthenay is a plutocracy; domains and standing are not given based on personal power or victories or political influence, but on the basis of wealth. This means that every House Carthenay demon is obsessed with its personal wealth and profit. The House is also highly law-abiding; theft is punishable by death, to ensure that no demon is promoted to a rank it did not 'genuinely' earn.

Money determines everything within the House. Carthenays buy and sell themselves freely; every Carthenay hulk is a mercenary in some fashion, every malcubus a whore. The demons pride themselves on their dignity, but there are few Carthenay who would not dig a penny out of a cesspool if they saw one lying in the ordure.

The Carthenay are notoriously rule-bound. Contracts and legal customs dominate all their social interactions. The demons delight in finding some obscure loophole or precedent that lets them hurt a rival socially; physical confrontations are rare within Carthenay circles, although duels have been used in the past to resolve disputes. Much of Carthenay politics is hidden in the form of Covenants. The House has more bindings and debtors than any other. Invisible chains constrain every Carthenay.

Carthenay is the only House that formally permits other demons to be bought and sold as slaves. Some penniless Carthenays sell themselves into temporary slavery, called indenture, to raise money for iliaster. Others are prisoners of war or defeated foes who will be in chains until they are destroyed. Other slaves are mortals – hellborn, captured newcomers or even soul-bought faustians.

The Carthenay are the great bankers of Hell, offering loans of money, iliaster or even souls. Every House has been forced at some point to take the Carthenay's devilish offer.

Holdings

The Carthenay estates are primarily located on the Sixth and Seventh Circles, and they own plenty of both. However, these holdings are only a fraction of the true extent of the Carthenay wealth, as the House owns millions of factories, waystations, inns, tenements, mines, fortresses and other properties across Hell. While purchasing some little hovel is beneath the rest of the Great Houses, if there is money to be made in hovels, then the Carthenay will be in there 'faster than a Riethii gets naked', as the saying goes.

The most famous of these holdings are the Vaults of Mammon, a massive fortress on the Sixth. Most of the Vaults are underground, a warren of dungeons, vaults and deathtraps. No living demon knows even half the secrets of the vaults. All those who built it are dead and the damned slaves who raised its walls have long since been turned into wastrels or soulstone blocks. A new castle, the Counting House, stands atop the Vaults themselves – the structure below was built before counter-magic architecture was developed, so the Vaults are vulnerable to sorcery.



Unlike the other Houses, nobles in House Carthenay serve terms. A barony might be granted only for a decade or so, at which time the Lord must prove it has made a profit or lose its domain. Therefore, the Carthenay domains tend to be anonymous and dull, without the character that comes from some insane demon ruling there for centuries. Notable domains include the Grand Duchy of Greybier, where prisoners are held in stasis until a use is found for them, the torture palaces of Tallyweep, and the distant Duchy of Coldface where the Lethe Clouds are made.

Notable Members

The Head of House Carthenay was never actually replaced after the death of Carthenay. Instead, a chairman is selected from the ranks of the Grand Dukes to rule the House. The chairman rules for twenty one years or until the rest of the board of Dukes votes them out.

Chairman von Berrengarth

The current Lord of the Carthenay is a returning chairman; he ruled for seven terms in a row in the immediate aftermath of the war before relinquishing his position and returning to the Duchy of Yawrmoth to devote his time to the Carthenay navy. He was returned to the post as a compromise candidate; enough of the Dukes respect the old miser for him to be elected where no other demon could assemble enough support. Old Contumacious has a personal fortune verging on the absurd; out of all the Carthenay, he is perhaps the least greedy. This trait makes the other House Lords very wary of von Berrengarth; if he cannot be relied upon to waste his time grubbing for cash, his actions cannot be predicted.

Luxibel Toadscrote

The current Duke of Greybier, this artificer is an avid researcher and keeper of the hall of records and accounts, where the contents of both the Vaults of Mammon and the Greybier catacombs are meticulously detailed. Toadscrote has recently uncovered evidence of theft and financial irregularities within the Vaults, but is not yet sure who to blackmail.

Titus Spittlegreave

The commander of the Carthenay forces who protect the Vaults of Mammon, Spittlegreave is known for its utter hatred of mercenaries. As a large portion of the Carthenay army is made up of hired claws,

having the supreme commander be utterly opposed to mercenaries has created problems in the past.

Noble Mutations

Like the Astyanath, the Carthenays have three distinct noble chains.

Chain of Mammon's Wealth

This chain allows the demon to influence the meaning and power of its finances. The lure of gold and gems works even on the hellkin, and thousands of immortal souls have been bought with the promise of temporary wealth.

I – Dreams of Avarice (Mind-Affecting, Psychic):

By spending two iliaster, the demon can awaken covetous feelings in others. The target of this mutation must make a Will save, modified by its 10 minus Corruption (so a character with a Corruption below 10 gains a bonus to the save, a character with a Corruption above 10 suffers a penalty). If the saving throw is failed, the character becomes inflamed with the desire for wealth; it suffers a –1 penalty to resist Influencing attempts if bribed by an amount of coin equal to its level x 10 in crowns.

II – Fortune Favoured: The demon can draw upon the power of its own wealth. When this link is chosen, the demon links its life energy to its fortune. It gains Fast Healing 1, but has a maximum hit point total equal to one per hundred crowns in its fortune. For example, if the demon's fortune dropped to 5,000 crowns, it could have a maximum total of 50 hit points. Only items the demon directly owns count for this mutation.

III – Coin of my Heart (Psychic): By spending one iliaster and touching a coin, the demon can invest part of itself into the coin. The demon is now psychically linked to the coin; it always knows where the coin is and if it being handled. Touching the coin counts as touching the demon, allowing it to use touch-based abilities. The demon also gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Possession attempts against a creature bearing the coin.

Only one coin can be linked at any time. A demon may unlink a coin freely.

IV – Wealth Breeds Wealth: With the acquisition of this link, the demon's fortune is assured. Its personal fortune calls to other such concentrations of wealth. The demon gains a fate pool equal to one per 10,000 crowns in its treasury; only coins and other such

Soul Cage

A Soul Cage is a special enhancement that can be added to a fortress. Iliaster extracted from a soul within a Soul Cage is transmitted directly to the demon's reserve. Soul Cages are detailed in *Book of the Conqueror*.

liquid treasure counts for this mutation. This fate pool is only applied to business-related dealings on the demon's part. This fate pool resets every three months.

Chain of Soul Trading

The Soul Trading Chain is a dangerous mutation of House Carthenay. If it has not captured as many souls as Haimon slavers trawling the fields of the First Circle, that is only because there are far fewer demons who possess these mutations.

I – Purchase Soul: While any fortress with a Soul Cage (see sidebar) can take Covenanted souls at the moment of death (see *Book of the Conqueror*), a demon with this mutation can claim the souls from anywhere in Hell. If the demon has a Covenant with a mortal and the mortal dies, the mortal's soul appears next to the demon.

II – Master Soul: The demon can now establish Covenants with any soul, even ones with a Corruption below 11. The soul counts as having a Corruption of 20 for the purposes of entering into Covenants with the demon.

III – Consume Soul: The demon can now swallow souls whole. If the soul is resisting, then the demon must grapple it and eat it (the soul cannot attack once swallowed, but can escape if the demon is breached). The soul suffers 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round and the demon gains an equal amount of iliaster each round.

IV – Drain Soul: When the demon uses the Consume Soul mutation, it may use the soul's hit point total or any of its ability scores or skill rank totals as its own until the soul's Constitution is destroyed. The demon may choose to reduce the damage from its stomach to 1d4 Constitution per hour instead of per round.

Chain of the Heartless Miser

This chain emphasises the Carthenay reputation for cunning and intelligence.

I – Count the Hours of Life (Mental): The demon can now spend one iliaster as a free action to evaluate an enemy that it can see and learn that enemy's level, hit point total, attack bonus or ranks in a specific skill. This also gives the demon the benefits of the Dodge and Combat Expertise feats against that target for one hour.

II –Devaluation: The demon can now denigrate and reduce the abilities of a target. This costs three iliaster per one-point reduction in the target's base attack bonus, ranks in a specific skill, specific ability score or saving throw. This devaluation lasts for one hour per level of the demon. The demon must be able to see the target.

This link carries a drawback; the demon's mere presence causes material to rust and rot. The demon's equipment and dwellings need repairs equal to 5% of their cost every year.

III – Cold Wisdom (Mental): The demon becomes able to predict trends, both in economies and the fate of others. The demon may spend 15 iliaster and make an appropriate Knowledge or intelligence check; the result of this check becomes a fate pool (see Influence

prediction the demon makes related to that check. For example, the demon could predict that a foe will fall in combat and make a Warcraft check to back up this prediction; the result of the Warcraft check becomes a fate pool dedicated to making that foe lose.

IV – Hoard Heart: The demon may now remove its heart from its body. While it lacks a heart, all breaches automatically close after one round. The heart has AC 10 and hit points equal to the demon's level.

Secrets of House Carthenay

House Carthenay knows more of the secrets of the other Houses than any except House Riethii; the Hoarders intelligence gathering may not be as complete as that of the seducers, but the Carthenay remember and record everything.

Most of the Carthenay's own secrets are locked in the Vaults of Mammon; its deeper reaches have never been penetrated and any number of horrors could be concealed beneath the stone.

Iliaster Shards

House Carthenay still have a number of the ancient shards of Heaven carried down by The Fall. These huge crystalline structures can be reduced down into iliaster, but their value as soul stuff is as nothing compared to their value as alchemical structures and magical resonators. Theoretically, after all, a demon using *swift dispatch of the agent* could transport a servant straight into Heaven. The Carthenays have been studying the properties of these shards for centuries, hoping to learn how to replicate Heaven in Hell. In truth, the House lacks the arcane scholars to unravel the mysteries of the shards, but if there is profit to be had, the Carthenays will do whatever is necessary.

Leviathan

House Carthenay is the only House to have made contact with the mate/twin of the ur-spawn Behemoth. While Behemoth swims in the Sunless Sea and is a well known hazard to shipping, Leviathan – the more powerful and intelligent of the two – is trapped in a nameless ocean on the far side of the Pit. The Pit divides the two seas and keeps the creatures apart.

The Carthenay exploratory ships managed to land on Leviathan and offered it a deal. If Leviathan entered into the service of House Carthenay for a time, the House vowed to cut a great canal between the two seas to reunite the two spawn. Such a canal would be a colossal undertaking, a feat of engineering far



beyond anything yet attempted by the Infernum as a whole, let alone a single House. The only viable way to do it would be to breach the walls of the Pit and fill the whole of the Lower Hells with water or lava.

The Lords of the House are still unsure what to do with an ancient and intelligent spawn that can vomit up an army in a matter of days, but they are certainly considering the question.

Mortal Cults

It is exceedingly difficult for demons to influence the mortal world. The only ways to get there are through rare and unstable natural portals, or by having a sorcerer transport a demon there. In both cases, the demon tends to starve to death rather quickly, as iliaster is hard to come by in the mortal world. Only House Carthenay has managed to extend its influence into the mortal world on a long-term basis; the Hoarders sponsor networks of sorcerers, demonic cults, corrupt financial and legal institutions and so on. Most of the members and victims of these groups end up selling their souls, so they can be collected in the Carthenay fortresses. These groups are guided by possessions, sorcerous messages and the occasional visit by a demon, but for the most part they are capable of running and expanding themselves.

House Glabretch

You are flesh, and flesh rots. We can smell the cells moving and decaying in your body. We whisper to them, moving this chemical here and this enzyme there, and thus we make disease bloom throughout your lungs. Push your flesh another way and your bones sprout cancers like wildflowers.

We all succumb to entropy in the end. It is the province of the Glabretchi to decide how you get there. Now, which organs can you do without...?

History

The history of House Glabretch is a short one. A demon called Glabretch escaped from the angels and made its home in the Third Circle, and to this day no one has been able to get rid of its followers. They have survived by virtue of filth and sheer bloody mindedness.

Certainly, if one studies the archives of House Haimon or in the libraries of Pandemonium, it often seems that there are only eight Great Houses, not nine. The Glabretchi are ignored whenever possible by the rest of the Pit. They like it that way. Secrecy is the hidden watchword of House Glabretch.

Glabretch the imp and Abhor the beast were the two strongest demons to escape from Dominion masters and flee into the wilderness of the Pit. They made their home in the foetid dens of the spawn, surrounded by filth and death. Abhor chose to press onwards into the timeless tunnels, but Glabretch decided it felt quite at home there. The two parted as friends, if demons can be friends, and Glabretch sent messengers carrying bottled iliaster down to Abhor whenever the imp could steal souls from the angels.

The imp acquired followers from the other exiles, so it was quite aware of the growing political turmoil in the Lower Pit. When the Dominions rebelled against the Thrones and the demons slaughtered them both, Glabretch's tribe were ready. They seized several angelic fortresses on the Third Circle and entrenched themselves there. The armies of the other demons were occupied down the Pit, so the so-called Glabretchi were able to capture key sites, enough souls to support themselves – and a handful of mortals. The imp was fascinated by these creatures, especially by how their bodies changed and weakened when exposed to Corruption. Through a series of grotesque experiments, Glabretch managed to learn the nature of disease and transfer it to its followers.

House Oblurott claimed the entirety of the Third Circle in 205 AF; House Haimon responded by claiming House status and disputing this claim. Both new Houses saw the territory of the Glabretchi scum as theirs and a war began to drive the Glabretchi out. The Putrid demons had little military training, a dearth of iliaster and no fortifications or weaponry to speak of. By contrast, the Oblurott and Haimon forces were both angel-trained and veterans of battle. Whenever the Glabretchi fought in open battle, they were utterly slaughtered. Therefore, the Glabretchi fled before advancing armies, hiding like the mortal tribes of the First do today.

Strange reports began to filter back from the front to the Lords of the Oblurott and Haimon. The troops sent into Glabretchi land came back changed, weakened... tainted. They suffered from something like Corruption, yet these were hellkin. This bizarre phenomenon was theorised to be some form of possession, and when it proved to be communicable to others who had not had contact with the Glabretchi, it terrified the House Lords. The affected – or more accurately infected – demons were banished into the wilderness. There, their former enemies in the Glabretchi took them in and taught them to keep the disease locked in stasis within their cells. The Glabretch army grew by absorbing the forces of

others, like a military parasite.

After fifty years of fruitless war, Haimon and Oblurott chose to recognise the Glabretchi as a Great House to save face; better to acknowledge their neighbours as equals to be respected instead of vermin who resisted all attempts to wipe them out. The Glabretchi seemed almost bemused by their new political standing, especially when Pandemonium was re-opened and they had to send diplomats to that far-off city.

During the next few decades, the Glabretchi slowly became integrated into the larger Infernum. Special enclosed carriages were built so that diseased demons could travel through the lands of other Houses safely. The Glabretchi armies grew as the House gained access to spawning pits in exchange for a few breeding pairs of mortals. They also acquired a reputation for using assassins – the sealed carriages could also be used to bring killer demons down from the Upper Hell without anyone noticing. Glabretchi forces even managed to ambush and destroy the deceiver Lord of House Jelac. Most importantly, a Glabretchi Duke created the fungal entity-landscape called the moliata, which made their borders far more secure.

The eruption of the Grasping Wars, Riethii expansion, Sturrach's War and so on, all the terrible carnage and slaughter that consumed the Pit for centuries hardly affected the Glabretch. They withdrew from their Lower Circle holdings to fortify the moliata. They had been expanding into the tunnels beyond from before the Infernum was founded, so they had already won the grasping war by any reasonable definition of victory. As for Sturrach's War, the Glabretch estates were utterly untouched by the war. Indeed, they profited from the war more than any other House; by the time the rest of the Houses had exhausted themselves, the Glabretchi army was able to push out and take souls from Haimon and Oblurott.

For a brief time, it seemed as if the Glabretchi were poised to sweep down and take territory all over the Pit, but a ragged coalition of Houses warned the Putrid Ones that any expansion would be punished by war. Glabretch itself, who still ruled the House, had no intention of going far beyond the borders of the slow-growing moliata; conquest is for a real House, and the Glabretchi are only part of the Infernum in the loosest sense. They used their time of pre-eminence to reinforce their home and lay foundations to endure the longest siege.

The one major defeat suffered by House Glabretch

came at the hands of angels. Nine angels calling themselves the Sword of Light attacked the moliata and destroyed Glabretch's personal fortress. To the elder Glabretchi, this confirmed all their old fears; the demon tribe had been hiding from the angels for hundreds of years and now their leader was slain by them. From that day, House Glabretch vowed undying hatred and revenge upon all angels.

Current Standing

The strength of the Glabretch has always been hard to estimate. Politically, they are largely irrelevant; they take little part in the politics of the Pit, and seem more interested in causing havoc and division than in advancing their own position. They traditionally oppose anything that Haimon or Oblurott propose; as the Haimon are equally apolitical, this boils down to annoying the Oblurott at every turn.

The Glabretch military is an unknown quantity. Most of the Houses, especially House Sturrach, dismiss the Putrid Ones as weak, untrained and useless troops, but secretly every House worries about what horrors the Glabretch have in their spore vaults. Their military is relatively large, but decentralised; each Lord has its own following, but these small groups are rarely brought together into full-scale armies.

Financially, the Glabretchi are second only to the Sturrach in terms of financial insecurity – and they are not likely to be bailed out by the Carthenay anytime soon. The Glabretch lack the soul fields of the other Houses – the Haimon and Oblurott are much better at collecting souls from the free reaches of Upper Hell and while the Glabretch have far more mortals in their possession, they are used as experimental subjects for diseases and produce weak and sickly souls.

Still, the Glabretch have sufficient supplies to last out a long siege – especially as they have learned the abhorrei technique of grafting demons to hosts, and the moliata itself can be used to support a demon. The Glabretch hold themselves outside the Infernum, hold themselves a separate race just as the abhorrei do, and know a war between demons and Glabretchi must come one day.

And they believe they will win.

Culture and Customs

Life in the Glabretch estates is quite different to the rest of the Infernum. The Glabretch believe that they are at war with the rest of the Pit and that a great confrontation is always on the verge of erupting. They

are therefore always under siege. This creates a sense of brotherhood and of paranoia among the Glabretch; they help each other far more than demons commonly do, but also punish any betrayal harshly.

Covenants are rarely used among the Glabretchi, at least in any official capacity. The custom of Covenanting is seen as a Dominion practice (the estates of the Glabretch are perhaps the only place in the Pit where terms like Throne or Dominion are thrown around in casual conversation; the Luciferine Heresy is also acknowledged to be true among the Glabretch), so the Glabretchi prefer informal agreements and community efforts. Of course, demons being demons, Covenants are still widely used by individual Glabretchi.

The Glabretchi live in filth and rot; this sickness permeates and sustains them. Every Glabretchi is dying of dozens of illnesses, but they can use the mutations passed down through the tribe to hold these sicknesses in check and draw strength from them. They can manipulate their own decay to turn it into unnatural growth. A side effect of this is the hatred of beauty. The Glabretch delight in ugliness and distortion.

Angels are anathema in these lands; there are no Glabretch-adopted angels, and they are attacked on sight. They are forced to tolerate the angelic nobles of other Houses, but such fallen are warned to stay well away from the territory of the Putrid.

Every Glabretch is expected to contribute towards the good and the defence of the whole. The most common method is to work towards new disease-weapons or the expansion of the moliata.

Holdings

The House Glabretch holdings are concentrated almost exclusively on the Third Circle. They have an outcropping on the Fifth, in the territory called the Gash, and they have a few estates on the Seventh and Eighth, but nothing they cannot spare. The Glabretch could be forced back to the moliata and lose nothing of significance to them.

The territory within the moliata, by contrast, is the most heavily developed and settled section of the Infernum outside of the industrial cities of the Sixth. The Glabretch are very numerous and the vast majority of them are crammed into about a ninth of their territory. Bizarre nests and tenement-domes crowd in on factories and torture palaces. Other sections of the holdings are testing grounds, where mortals, spawn and demons run free so diseases can

be tested on them.

The Glabretch have a number of secret refuges in the deep tunnels; the House has explored more of Hell than any other. They even have a city on the far side of the Sunless Sea, which they share with the abhorei. This city of Scarholm is a trading city, where the Glabretch exchange slaves for abhorei biotechnology.

Notable Members

The politics of House Glabretch is dominated by a well-established hierarchy of Lords. After all, the tribe was ruled by a single demon until around two hundred years ago, and the House is still reeling from the loss of their leader. The imp was as beloved as a demon could be by its pestilent followers. The current leader of House Glabretch is another imp, Bilothrax of the Notable Stench. The imp was one of Glabretch's lieutenants and has resolved to rule as its master did. The position of House Head has less influence than it does in other Houses, as much of the politics of the Glabretchi is resolved in the Moliata Union.

Bilothrax

The master of House Glabretch, Bilothrax is a flying sphere of fungus with wings, mouths and eyes protruding from its central mass. The creature's impish heritage is far behind it. Politically, Bilothrax is known as a conservative, preferring to implement the policy of entrenchment and germ warfare that Glabretch itself set in place rather than try anything new. It is well known that Bilothrax was one of only a handful of senior Glabretchi Dukes who survived the assault on Glabretch's home, so there are occasionally accusations that the imp was involved in the Sword of Light's attack. As Bilothrax seems terrified by the mere mention of angels, few loyal Glabretchi subscribe to this theory.

Moliata Union

The moliata can support demon life in the same way the abhorei blend themselves with spawn hosts. It is a tradition of the Glabretchi that deposed nobles of the House are not destroyed; instead, they are attached to the moliata. These grafted demons are immobile and have limited power, but their wisdom and knowledge is still available to the tribe. The Moliata Union – a council of these sessile demons – is a growing power bloc within the Glabretchi. The Union is led by the radical Duke Mole who created the fungal carpet in the first place.

Zofilch Angel-Breaker

The title of Angel-Breaker was once given to the founder of House Sturrach, in recognition of the demon's slaughter of the angels at the Battle of Pandemonium. No demon has been called Angel-Breaker since, as none has come close to equalling Sturrach's tally of kills. The Glabretchi stalker Zofilch has vowed to win that title, for it loathes the beauty of the Fallen more than anything else in all the worlds. While Zofilch has killed several lesser fallen, it truly desires to destroy one of the powerful, established angels of Hell, like the mad sheriff Uriel in Golgotha or even Purity the Riethii himself.

Noble Mutations

House Glabretch has three noble chains that are commonly seen, although the sheer number of sage-Lords who are experimenting on their own bodies means that they have access to the widest range of unique mutations among any of the Houses.

Chain of the Fungal Bloom

This is the chain used to create the moliata fungus that surrounds the Glabretchi territories.

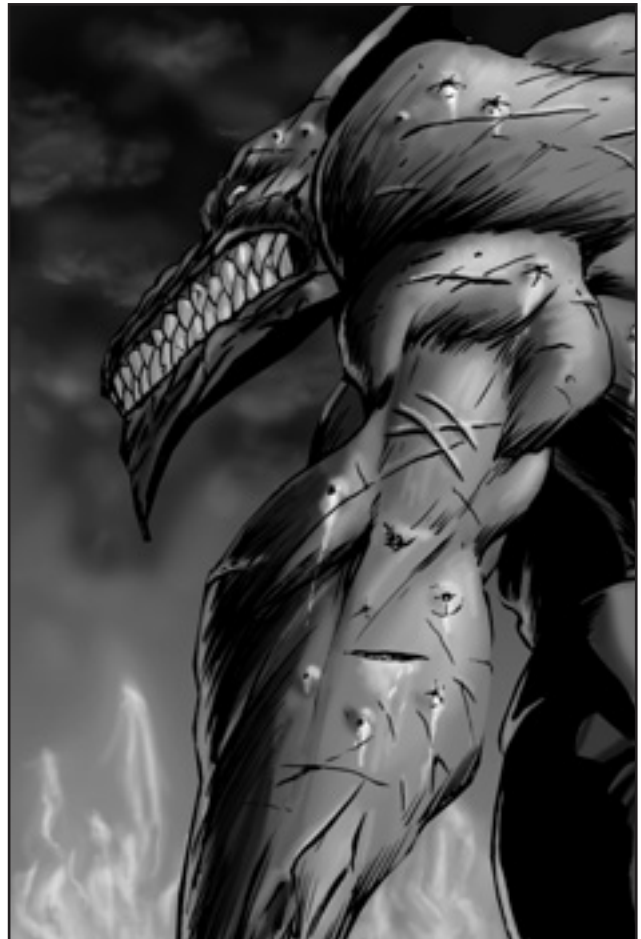
I – Moliata Blend: The demon's flesh mottles and spouts a sheath of fungal spores. It gains a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks when on the moliata, as well as a +2 enhancement bonus to its Dexterity and Constitution scores.

II – Moliata Sense: This mutation functions just like the Domain Awareness link of the Chain of the Burning Land, but works only in lands covered by the moliata.

III – Moliata Travel: The demon can now sink into the moliata and burrow through it at high speed. The demon gains a Burrow speed equal to twice its base speed, but this movement is only usable within the moliata.

IV – Moliata Shape: The demon can now reshape the stuff of the moliata by touching it. Using this mutation costs one iliaster for every ten minutes. The demon can work with the fungal surface as through it were clay, but it is hard as stone when any other creature touches it.

V – Moliata Seed: The demon may spend fifteen iliaster to plant a moliata seed where it stands. The demon must be within its own domain to use this mutation. The moliata seed grows in radius by a quarter of a mile every day, but costs the demon one



iliaster per day per mile (or part thereof) of radius while it is growing. The demon can stop the seed growing at will, but cannot restart it. While the seed is growing, the moliata is soft and vulnerable to fire. Once it stops growing, it becomes as hard as stone.

Chain of Pestilence

This is a noble improvement on the more common Chain of Disease, and requires that the demon progress along that lesser chain first before developing this noble mutation.

I – Disease Control: The demon develops bony needles that sprout from its claws, tail or elsewhere on its body. It can insert these needles into another demon, mortal, spawn or other living creature when using the Breed Disease link of the Chain of Disease. This creature incubates and suffers the effects of the disease instead of the demon. The demon can still only have one active disease at a time.

II.I – Orchard of Filth: The demon can now swap diseases in and out of hosts using the Breed Disease and Disease Control mutations. Most demons who develop this mutation keep a so-called orchard of human and demon hosts hanging from life support

gear.

II.II – Efficient Pestilence: The iliaster costs for the Chain of Disease are all halved.

III – Balance the Humours: By touching a target and spending one iliaster per two levels of the target, the demon can halt the progress of a sickness in that target's body. This removes the effects but not the presence of the disease; the character regains any lost ability scores or other damage, but it is still infectious and still shows the signs and symptoms of the disease. The demon can spend an equal amount of iliaster to restart the disease.

IV – Death Curse Disease: This link can only be used when the demon is breached or reduced below 0 hit points. It may convert its ability scores into iliaster on a one-for-one basis, and use this iliaster to instantly breed and release a disease (using the Breed Disease link of the Chain of Disease). This disease affects all creatures within reach of the dying demon.

Chain of the Flowering Flesh

The Flowering Flesh Chain is essentially a reverse of the normal Glabretch mutations; it uses diseases to breed strength instead of weakness.

I – Parasite Ruler: This mutation allows the demon to drain health from its subjects. While within the confines of its domain, it gains one temporary hit point for every hundred living subjects dwelling there. Every one of its subjects loses one hit point for as long as they are in the domain.

II – Reordered Flesh: When this link is chosen, the demon may subtract up to eight points from any ability score and add them to any others. This change is accompanied by cancerous growths and bone-wrenching contortions.

This link carries a drawback; the demon's changed form is dependant on its domain. If the demon leaves its domain, it loses one point from an ability score improved by this mutation each day. These points remain lost until the demon returns to its domain, at which point the damage heals normally.

III – Strength to the Strong: The demon can now spend one iliaster per two levels to gain bonus hit points as per the Parasite Ruler mutation. For example, a 16th level Duke could spend eight iliaster to drain one hit point from every subject in its domain and gain one bonus hit point for every hundred points drained. Activating this mutation is a move action.

A demon can kill creatures in its domain using this mutation.

IV – Flowering Flesh Touch: The Flowering Flesh Touch allows the demon to use the Reordered Flesh mutation on others. This costs one iliaster per level of the target and is a permanent change unless the target leaves the demon's domain, at which point the ability scores revert to their original levels at a rate of one point gained and lost per day. Flowering Flesh Touch can only be used once on a creature (although it can be used again if the creature leaves the domain and regains its original distribution of ability scores, then comes back to the demon).

Secrets of House Glabretch

The Glabretchi have more secrets than most, even if some of them are not especially obscure – every House knows the Putrid House has all sorts of horrible diseases locked in vaults, they just do not know what these pestilences are. Other secrets are far more secure...

The Abhorei Alliance

Alliance is possibly too strong a word, but the Glabretch and the Kingdom of Abhor do have an... understanding. They have traded secrets, slaves and iliaster in the past, and the Glabretchi have even build the trade city of Scarholm. The Putrid know that if it was discovered that they were trading with the enemy, it would draw attacks from the other Houses of the Infernum, so these contacts are kept as secret as possible. Most trade is done via submersibles made from bloated spawn-fish.

The abhorei are alarmed at the thought that the Astyanath scholars who know their surgical techniques will be able to create some method or magic of breaking the host/parasite link that sustains the abhorei. The Glabretchi have pledged to discover which of the Cruel Ones knows the abhorei techniques and to destroy them.

The Branded

One of the sources for new members of the Branded tribe of escaped slaves is the testing grounds of the Glabretchi. Unfortunate mortals are set free into the wilderness and blasted with disease spores. Sometimes, they escape into the lands beyond the moliata and join up with the Branded or another Early tribe – as long as they are free of disease.

Some diseases, however, can stay dormant for

generations, passed down from parent to child hiding in the cells. Two magical diseases of note are rife among the Branded. The first, the Plague of the Demon Seed, will cause any victims of it to sire or give birth to twisted, runty half-demons. The disease can be activated through exposure to a spore held by the Glabretch.

The second disease is more conventional; it will kill the Branded over a matter of months. The Glabretch have an alchemical compound that cures this disease; once they are able to produce this cure in great quantities, they can activate the disease and then hold the Branded hostage to the cure.

House Haimon

From dust you come, and from dust you shall return – and the Haimon shall be there waiting for you. The Lords of death and dust have claimed their silent kingdom, and from their grasp there is no escape.

History

According to the annals of the other Houses, the rise of House Haimon can be traced to an army of starving demons in the Second Circle. Haimon appeared and gave them the souls they needed to survive in exchange for their loyalty. No record of Haimon's spawning exist; there was no news of its death until a new Head of House Haimon was chosen. No images or writings of the Founder survive.

Haimon founded its House and vanished from the sight of the Infernum.

Only the nobles of the House know the truth; Haimon was an angel who fled the attack on Pandemonium. She was no friend of Azazel, so she did not flee with the rest of her kind to the Broken cosmos. Instead, she flew back to her fortress on the Second Circle and found it infested by demons. She realised that the old order in the Pit was gone, and that she would have to adapt to a new and very different Hell. Gaining a following of demons was only the first step; she needed protection against the demon hordes.

Haimon's duty as a Dominion had been overseeing the gathering of souls, so she knew where the best soul fields were. The use of damned in Haimon armies stemmed from Haimon's lack of demons but wealth of souls. She also mistrusted her demon followers, preferring the comparative predictability of the dead.

House Haimon was quietly influential in enforcing law and order in the Infernum; it pushed for the

establishment of courts, of the Councils of Hierarchs and the ranks of nobles. All these were aimed at allowing Haimon to keep the majority of the Pit at a distance. Even when new fallen angels appeared in the Pit and were adopted into the Houses, Haimon kept her identity secret.

The Brokenlander angels made contact with Haimon in 335 AF. She refused to aid them in their war on Hell, so they sent the first punitive expedition of their legions to attack her forces. Indeed, Haimon has traditionally been more concerned than any other House with invasions from beyond Hell – both the Benandanti and the Brokenlanders are especial enemies of the Deathly House.

Like their Glabretchi neighbours, the Haimon stayed out of Sturrach's War as much as possible. They fortified their borders and prepared for the war; the Legion of the Damned trained again and again for invasion by Sturrach forces. When the war came, it was almost an anti-climax. The Legions defeated the previously unbeatable Sturrach hordes, routed them and wiped them out almost to a demon.

Haimon herself was on the angelic Path of the Mortal, so she spent much of her time in mortal form, posing as a major-domo of the mysterious demon Head of the House. When she refused to press the advantage during war (citing the same reasons as Glabretch – neither House's armies were well equipped to fight a major war far from their home ground), assassins tried to destroy Haimon. They failed to kill the demon – as the demon did not actually exist – but they did manage to kill Haimon's 'mortal major-domo'. The last of the First Fallen left in the Pit found herself reduced to the status of common damned. Her Path of the Mortal abilities allowed her to survive death, but as a damned soul, she was condemned to a miserable and tormented existence.

With Haimon's death, the throne of the Deathly House fell into fierce contestation. Whole armies of the dead were reduced to wastrels as rival nobles clashed over the Throne. The House had always been very formal and factionalised, so now the grim machinery ground towards war. The eventual victor was a deceiver named Balfermos, whose mastery of necromancy was such that it able to embody a strike force of fifteen thousand damned who then skilled the other two rivals for the throne.

Balfermos has ruled since then, although it is rumoured to be succumbing to insanity and may not be long for the Hells.

Current Standing

Like House Glabretch, the Haimon are outside the normal life of the Infernum. Militarily, they are relatively strong; individually, few damned are the equal of a military-trained demon, but the discipline and determination of the Legions are second to none. The other Houses think little of the dead army, but each has a detachment of soulshapers to blunt the advance of the damned.

Haimon are the political glue to the Riethii's social whirl; together, the two keep the polite society of the Infernum together. That is not to say that the Haimon have anywhere near the influence of the Riethii, it means that they supply most of the clerks, official and sheer monolithic bureaucratic inertia that keeps the government of the Infernum in place. If the Haimon had any discernible political goals, this might be a significant advantage, but they remain neutral on most matters. Unlike the Glabretch, the Haimon participate in every ceremony and council; a Haimon hierarch might conscientiously attend every meeting and never once open its mouth.

The Haimon also dutifully participate in the Church of the Morningstar, supplying over a third of all its members.

The Haimon estates are notorious old-fashioned and primitive; they have few factories or torture palaces. Dead labour in forge, mine and torture chamber propels the Haimon economy.

Culture and Customs

The Haimon are obsessed with death. Even the demons appear dead; the average Haimon is pale and sickly, covered with a layer of dust and decaying flesh as if they had just emerged from a tomb. Their buildings resemble mausoleums for the most part; many are made of bone or piled gravestones. Their estates are eerily quiet; even the screams of damned souls being tortured are muted and infrequent. Every Haimon demon, even the lowliest, has its own retinue of damned servants and slaves, but the Haimon take no joy in any pleasures or distractions. They exist in the slow fall of dust and the silence of the grave.

The Haimon are very polite and formal, even hidebound. Every social interaction must follow strict rules; even purchasing a daily ration of iliaster is a complex ceremonial exchange of oaths and promises. Life on the Haimon estates is frustratingly slow to other demons, who are used to taking what they want

by force and politeness be damned. This ceremonial attitude extends to the Haimon dress sense (dark and starched, or grave shrouds), their relationships with lesser demons (oddly respectful) and to their social gatherings (funereal at best).

The Haimon ossuaries – massive structures made entirely of bone – are famed across the Infernum. These ossuaries are ceremonial places, used for sorcerous rites, promotions, trials and so on. The regimented nature of Haimon society demands such a place.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Haimon are the only House to bury their dead. Other demons discard the shell once a demon's iliaster is exhausted; a dead demon is no good for the spawning pits. The Haimon place their dead in elaborate crypts.

Holdings

The Haimon estates are concentrated on the Third and Fourth Circles, but they have smaller baronies and domains scattered throughout Hell, especially on the First. They find the company of other demons distasteful, so Haimon are rarely encountered in the cities and densely populated areas of the Infernum.

Within their own borders, the Haimon are generous with their territory; even a Housefellow is given a little tower or fortified graveyard to call home. This does mean that their estates are alarmingly subdivided, with a Baron having to deal with hundreds of petty claims and complaints from lesser demons.

Notable holdings include the Chalice of Dust, the Mourning Duchy and the Grand Duchy of Hallowside.

Notable Members

The most notable member of the House, Haimon herself, still haunts the Haimon Citadel on the Eighth Circle. For the most part, she has managed to avoid the indignities and agonies normally visited upon the damned, but she is seen as being too close to the dead Lord to win herself emancipation and a title; free damned are exceedingly rare in the Pit, even in House Haimon.

Lord Balfermos

The current Head of the House is said to be insane. Certainly, the necromancer Lord oversees the ceremonies and celebrations of House Haimon while muttering to itself and wearing a formal full-length



ballgown, but its sorcerous powers are undimmed. Much of the day-to-day running of House Haimon is undertaken by a pair of deceivers known as the Whispering Twins, Balfermos' personal retainers who both hold the rank of Grand Duke.

Gnomos

The Haimon Hierarch is an artificer called Gnomos, the Prince of Bone. Haimon has managed to attach herself to Gnomos' retinue, and plans to use him to return to power. Manipulating a hierarch up to the throne of a House is difficult at the best of times; doing so while dead may be impossible.

Noble Mutations

House Haimon has four chains of noble mutations.

Chain of Bone

This chain allows the demon to manipulate and conjure human and demon bones.

I – Marrowflesh (Physical, Exclusivity: Hide): The demon's skin bubbles and turns into marrow. The demon can now create bone from its flesh. Creating a one-foot cube of bone or a flat five-foot by five-foot sheet costs one iliaster and is a standard action. Bone has a hardness of 5 and 8 hit points per inch of

thickness.

The demon's flesh turns sticky and greyish-white in colour when this mutation is activated.

II – Bone Shaping: The demon can now shape bone as if it were clay. Activating this mutation costs one iliaster per ten minutes, and allows the demon to use any appropriate Craft skill with a bone object.

This link carries a drawback; the demon's own bones twist and crack, reducing the demon's Dexterity score by 2.

III – Command the Bones: The demon may now spend three iliaster to animate a bone object for one day. The bone object lacks the strength and animation to fight, but can move and obey the demon's commands. The object must fit within a 10 by 10 by 10 foot cube, although the demon can spend more iliaster to animate a larger object.

IV – Ironbone: The demon may now touch a bone object and spend three iliaster to make it harder than steel. The object's hardness and hit points both double permanently. The demon can even apply this to its own bones, gaining a +2 enhancement bonus to its natural Armour Class. This mutation can affect a bone object up to 10 by 10 by 10 feet in size, although it can be activated multiple times to affect a larger object.

V – Dance Macabre (Psychic): The demon's Command the Bones mutation is now in constant effect, with an aura radius of 150 feet if the demon is outside its domain, and 10 miles if within its domain. The demon may command any bony object freely over a psychic link at the cost of one iliaster although the object will stop moving once it completes the command. Objects have no intelligence or senses, so a bone statue commanded to follow a foe would stop moving once the foe passed out of the demon's line of sight. Animated objects cannot attack unless the demon keeps directing them, in which case they use the demon's base attack bonus.

Especially large objects may require more iliaster.

Chain of the Dead

The Dead Chain increases the demon's command over damned souls.

I – Soulshaping: The demon may now spend one iliaster to gain the ability to soulshape for ten minutes. If it already has this mutation, it gains a +4 insight

bonus to Craft (soulshaping) checks.

II – Cohere: By spending one iliaster per level of the target soul and touching a damned soul reduced below 0 hit points, the demon can cause the damned soul to instantly reform back to 1 hit point.

III – King of the Dead (Mind-Affecting): The demon's authority over the dead becomes manifest. It can spend one iliaster to gain a +2 bonus to any Influencing check made against a damned creature for one round.

This link carries a drawback; the demon becomes more and more like its dead subjects. It suffers a -2 penalty to any influencing checks made against non-damned creatures.

IV – Incorporeality: By spending one iliaster and touching a damned soul, the demon can make that soul incorporeal for one round per level of the demon. The demon can choose to end this effect at will. Using this mutation is an attack action; unwilling targets may make a Fortitude save to resist becoming incorporeal.

Chain of the Silent King

The Chain of the Silent King is one of the more alarming powers of the Haimon, reinforcing their reputation as grim Lords of death.

I – Despairing Silence: The demon's domain becomes choked in a pallor of mists and melancholy. Any creatures within the demon regain ability score damage at half the normal rate. The DC for mortal Will saves to generate iliaster is increased by +10.

II – Patience of the Dead: The demon's iliaster requirement is reduced by one-third. This link may be taken multiple times; each time, it drops the demon's requirement by one-third.

III – Death Aspect (Physical): Portions of the demon's face rot away, exposing parts of the skull. The stench of death permeates the demon. Any creature who is currently at half its hit points or less suffers a -4 penalty to all its saving throws against the demon's spells or mutations.

IV – Silence of the Grave: The demon's mouth sews itself shut. It may no longer drink iliaster; it can only renew its reserve through sorcery or implanted reserves. It cannot speak, and suffers a -5 penalty to all Sorcery checks and other skills that rely on speech. However, any souls that fall within its domain, or who form when a mortal is killed with the demons domain

are automatically teleported to the demon's fortress. They are not automatically Soul Caged, but do appear in its fortress.

Chain of Life-in-Death

The Life-in-Death chain can only be taken by a demon who has mastered the fifth link of the Haimon House chain, Haimon's Way, and has killed itself to become an undead thing. Undead demons may still gain noble mutations.

I – Rule the Dead Form: The demon gains a chosen mutation. This link may be taken multiple times.

Secrets of House Haimon

Haimon keeps its secrets close.

The Church of the Morningstar

Haimon knew the succubus Soline when the Deathly Queen was a Dominion and Soline and her sister Riethii were the lowly concubines of degenerate angels. When Soline was sent into Pandemonium, Haimon contacted the succubus through agents and told her what she needed to know to preserve the Morningstar. Ever since then, House Haimon has been the secret partner of the Church, providing much of its membership and support. Many Church enclaves are in fact secret strongholds of the Haimon, used to gather information or even teleport demons into the estates of rival Houses. The Haimon also have numerous demons and souls in the cathedrals in Pandemonium; if any House is ready to claim that city, it is the Haimon.

The Honoured Dead

The Lethe Clouds wash away the memories of those who fall through them. Mortals, angels and damned are left with only the most fragmented and mysterious pieces of their former identities. For the demons, this is usually an advantage, as the fallen creatures are confused and are therefore easy prey for the hellkin. The Lethe Clouds shield Hell from the attention of other worlds.

However, the Haimon make more use of their dead than any other House, and they need their damned to have all the wit and intelligence they had in life. The Honoured Dead are those who have had their memories restored to them. Great military leaders, scientists, diplomats and scholars are usually the ones chosen for this honour. Once a potential Honoured Dead soul is found, it is prepared with sorcerous rituals, then marched to the River Lethe. There, a

potion is made from Lethe-waste and plasm which removes the effect of the Clouds. As the diverted Lethe is mostly in the hands of House Carthenay, the Haimon must pay a steep fee to have their Honoured Dead restored – but it is worth it to put a Caesar, a Napoleon or an Alexander at the head of a damned legion.

The Hadean Kingdoms

The lands of the Dead on the surface are secretly supplied with weapons and intelligence by House Haimon. Again, they work through agents; one advantage of relying on the damned is that the House has a near-infinite supply of motivated, skilled and anonymous spies to send out. Soline was contacted by the dead when she went to found the Church of the Morningstar; so too were the petty Lords of the Hadean Kingdoms on the surface.

The Haimon intend to strengthen the Hadean kingdoms until they are usable as a weapon against the other Houses. Getting an army across the wilderness of the First Circle has traditionally been almost impossible; both demons and mortals starve. The dead, on the other hand, could come up behind the Glabretchi or Oblurott estates and catch them unawares.

Haimon researchers are also exploring the presence of damned souls on the mortal world; while most souls are dragged down to Hell or vanish from the perception of demons upon death, a small minority linger in the mortal world for a time as ghosts and poltergeists. If some Haimon sage could discover the mechanism for this, perhaps every mortal who ever died could be forced to join the Haimon legions...

House Lictat

Ambition is to be prized, treachery praised, deceit rewarded and victory taken at any cost. Let those who claim to be the rightful Lords of Hell try to stop us! There is no right save what we decide, no right save the might of blade and claw!

History

It was her mortal half that allowed her to do it.

Isani, the half-demon daughter of Jelac the Deceiver, was locked inside Citadel Jelac for centuries. That confinement was beyond any horrors dreamt of in the nightmares of the hellkin; the nobles of the House were forced to stalk each other for iliaster, fighting and scheming against each other in lightless halls. The few damned souls unlucky enough to be locked

in with a host of starving demon Lords were tortured more than any others in the history of the Pit – but it was not enough.

Isani had the small advantage of being half-mortal; she had a lesser need for iliaster and could produce some herself. She murdered siblings, relatives, friends and lovers to survive. It drove her insane, but she survived. She eventually found her way down into the dungeons of the Citadel, into vaults never explored by demons. She left traps to stop pursuers, and clues so that she could find her way back even in her addled state. Then, in the lowest part of the Citadel, she mummified her body and sent her spirit out. Her sire Jelac had been the greatest master of Possession among the hellkin, and now Isani exceeded even his reach.

In 461 AF, Isani managed to possess an independent fiend. The Infernum had changed greatly in the eight decades she had been incarcerated; all the Houses were at war. She laughed, for all her mind was consumed with the desire to see the other Lords – especially the Riethii – suffer as she had suffered. Isani eventually fell in with a rabble of ambitious independent demons of low birth who believed there was opportunity to be had in the war. Isolated from the common hellkin by her high standing, Isani was fascinated by the drive and ruthlessness of their lesser demons. Their leader, a deceiver named Lictat, was especially cunning and Isani became his advisor. She knew the greatest of deceivers of old, and under her tutelage, Lictat's power grew.

Then Lictat was destroyed by Sturrach, and all his followers including Isani were slaughtered. She let go of her host and fled back to her original body. The scream of frustration and loss echoed around the now-empty Citadel Jelac for days and burst the mummified lungs of her blackened, rotted body.

She began again, hoarding her dwindling life energy until she had enough to try another possession. It took over a century and a half before she was able to reach out and steal another demon's body. This time, she was a succubus of the Riethii – her most hated foes. She wasted a few years causing havoc by betraying the Riethii's secrets, then fled to put her plan into action. Isani knew there were many mercenaries and minor Houses who could be united into a formidable Great House. She travelled through the Pit, finding suitable demons and telling them of her plan. She did not reveal her identity, of course, so she pretended to be Lictat himself. Anyone who defied Sturrach at the height of the Bloody House's power was worthy of respect and the demons listened.

In 745 AF, Isani/Lictat told her followers how to open the gates of Citadel Jelac and the banner of House Lictat was raised above hundreds of fortresses and estates across the Pit. It was a slaver named Ygni who took the throne, however, as Lictat did not wish to rule. Instead, the demon calling itself Lictat vanished inside the Citadel Jelac, heading for the dungeons beneath.

The newborn House would have been destroyed by an alliance of the other Houses if it were not for the chaos of the Free City Heresy distracting them. Many in House Lictat believe that the Free Cities are a ploy by Lictat to ensure the preservation of their House, and so secretly support the Breaking of Oaths so long as it inconveniences the other Great Houses.

Current Standing

House Lictat's standing is uncertain. Politically, it is generally seen as the weakest of the Houses, as the others see them as upstarts and thieves. That said, the House has the potential to ascend rapidly, as unlike Glabretch or Haimon, the Lictat are willing to play the courtly games. Once the ambitious nobles of the other Houses recognise the potential of a change in the established order of things, the Lictat could become a second-tier political House on a par with Sturrach or Zethu.

Militarily, the Lictat have plenty of man-power, but no organisation. Some of the mercenary units incorporated into the Usurper House are elite forces who could challenge the best of the Sturrach or the Legions of the Damned, but others are disorganised rabbles of hellkin who would fall over in a stiff breeze. Their armies are also woefully under-equipped with modern weapons; they have few hellcannons or biomechanical vehicles, for example.

The Lictat estates are scattered across the Pit; they have claimed a wide expanse of marginal land in the Second, as well as hundreds of minor domains in the rest of Hell. The chances of the House holding all these domains is slim; House Lictat cannot hope to protect, say, a single barony surrounded on all sides by Sturrach land, but it should be able to consolidate its Second Circle holdings. Being so far beyond the heartland of Lower Hell will cripple any economic or military ambitions on Lictat's part, though.

Culture and Customs

On the one hand, the demons of House Lictat are now nobles, and should be as refined and arrogant as

any Astyanath. On another hand, they are a new and lusty young House, full of vigour and hate, and so have no need to ape the customs of the degenerate other Houses. On a third hand (easily mutated), they are heirs to the breeding and noble heritage of House Jelac, which was one of the most powerful and respected families. On a fourth, they honour the name of Lictat who argued that the noble Houses could be defeated and that an ambitious demon could claim any throne and break any oath it chose.

'Confused and contradictory' sums up House Lictat; there is no overarching culture or belief that unites its demons. Infighting is common; while every Lord of the Lictat agrees that being part of a Great House is a huge advantage, most could name two or three other Lords who really drag the Lictat down and who should be executed or exiled as soon as possible.

Even the hierarchy of House Lictat is in flux. The other Houses are used to the rule of Barons bowing to Viscounts, Viscounts bowing to Earls and so on, but the Lictat are not so formal. Arguments and even duels between demons of widely disparate ranks are common.

Holdings

The Lictat estates, such as they are, are found in the Second Circle, where the demons are desperately trying to fortify a mountain range that was deemed not worth claiming by the other Houses. The Lictat obviously hope to make their fortune in soul trading and capture – by placing themselves so close to the rich fields of the First Circle, they may be able to beat Haimon and Oblurott at their own game.

The Lictat covet the city of Minos, which would cement their mastery of Upper Hell soul gathering, but taking the City of Judgement is currently beyond their power. Controlling the old Inferno Line would do just as well, but it is infested with traps, renegades, mortals and lost souls.

House Lictat has very few fortresses worthy of the name; this makes the House very vulnerable to sorcery. If it were not for the problems afflicting House Zethu, many notable members of the Usurpers would surely have been summoned away and murdered by now.

Notable Members

The Lord of the Lictat is Ygni, formerly master of the House of Ygni, a minor House allied with House Glabretch. The Glabretchi have few satellite Houses, as they are a breed apart from the rest of the Infernum.



Ygni's House oversaw the trade in Glabretch-bred spawn. While he joined House Lictat, he stole a great deal of stock and money from his masters. Ygni is incredibly egotistical, having practically convinced himself that he brought House Lictat up to its present heights. He has never even seen the Second Circle estates of the House, but is assured they exceed even the Gardens of Unholy Delight in wealth and magnificence.

Urbastis

The true ruler of the Second Circle estates is the ex-mercenary fiend and Grand Duke of the Zeberrok Expanse, Duke Urbastis the Red. It rules its fellow Dukes with an iron fist, denying them contact with the Citadel and censoring their reports. Urbastis' power is partially based on its allies, the sorcerers of the Cult of the Black Thorn and the abhorei-trained ex-Astyanath surgeon, Arac. It is Arac who designed the spiderweb foundations of the estates here.

Isani

Then, of course, there is Isani. She might still be in the dungeons beneath her ancestral home, looking for

her body, or she may be engaged on the next step of her plan for revenge upon all the Houses...

Noble Mutations

House Lictat has two chains of noble mutations. One is original to the House, the other was known only to the nobles of the old House Jelac and has been usurped.

Chain of the Usurper

The Usurper Chain reflects the territorial and political ambitions of House Lictat.

I – Thief of Land: Land controlled by a demon with this mutation does not count as being part of any other demon's domain so long as this demon is in control of it. For example, a demon with the Chain of the Burning Land would be unable to use those mutations on an area controlled by a Lictat invader.

II – Thief of Power: If the demon conquers part of another demon's domain, it may take the appropriate number of noble mutations from that demon. For example, a Lictat who carves a barony out of an earldom would steal the Earl's first three noble mutations (the ones it gained for being a Daemon, a Captain and a Baron).

III – Thief of Chains: If the demon kills another demon, it may spend one iliaster for every two levels of the target demon as a free action that round. If this is done, then the killer steals all the Covenants held by the dead demon.

Chain of the Demon King

The Demon King chain was believed to have died with House Jelac, but has been restored by the Lictat.

I – Size Increase

II – Terror of Hell (Psychic): The demon exudes an aura of unreasoning terror. It may spend three iliaster when making an Intimidation check; any creature who fails to resist the Intimidation check suffers a -4 penalty to all saving throws against the demon's spells and effects for 24 hours.

III – Demon Lord: The demon gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Charisma while within its own domain.

IV – King of Hell: The demon may now spend three iliaster as a free action to give it a +1 bonus to any d20 roll. Any amount of iliaster may be spent in this



fashion in a round.

Secrets of House Lictat

Few of the younger demons of House Lictat have any secrets of their own; the House is too young and raw to have the baroque mysteries of the others. It is the founding of the House that is wrapped in secrecy; few are aware of the involvement of Isani, Jelac's Daughter or her current activities.

The Sleeping Angel

Reclaiming the Inferno Line is a priority for House Lictat; this ancient circle of fortresses offer significant military power. The House's demons have been slowly clearing the line of squatters, death-traps and rubble, but have run into significant obstacles.

They have also found some mysteries. In one chamber buried deep beneath the defences, a young host of Lictat demons found an angel lying on a marble slab. This angel appears to be in some form of suspended animation, but its garb and mutations suggest that it is one of the First Fallen. Out of fear of rousing

one of the founders of Hell, the Lictat have not yet disturbed the angel – but it could be a weapon of great power. After all, an angel slew Glabretch itself at the height of the Putrid Lord's power.

The Phantom of the Citadel

Isani may not have been the only Jelac to survive their incarceration. Several Lictat Lords have been murdered while visiting the Eighth Circle Citadel. It is only by having this Citadel that the Lictat are able to maintain their Great House status, so finding and killing this murderer is vital. So far, however, the Lictat guards have been unable to locate the demon – or damned or angel or whatever it is – within the warren of dungeons and rooms in the Citadel. Now, the Pandemonium Guard are investigating the killings, exposing the inner workings of House Lictat to the rest of the Pit.

The League of Oathbreakers

House Lictat's connection to the Free City Heresy is uncertain even to the Lictat themselves, but that has not stopped some ambitious Usurpers from aiding the heretics. They plot to infect other cities controlled by rival Houses with the heresy. Places like Moloch and Minos are primary targets of the League.

House Oblurott

You are meat. We shall consume you, make you part of us. All you are shall be devoured.

History

The first demons were not bred in the spawning pits. They came from the sexual coupling of angels and spawn. Oblurott was born from a spawn-mother, but its father was the angel Domiel. Oblurott devoured its siblings before it crawled from its mother, and so was deemed a failure – the angels needed a great army, so a creature that ate half-a-dozen other demons before it was born was not useful to them. However, Domiel grew strangely attached to the fruit of his loins, and took the infant demon home to his fortress on the Third Circle.

There, Oblurott dwelt in the midden, devouring the waste of the fortress' demon servants. Its father spoke to the twisted demon-child and Oblurott learned much at Domiel's feet. Soon, the demon began to advise its father; it was the beginning of the power struggle between the Dominions and the Thrones and the naïve angel profited greatly from the demon's counsel.

It is said that when the demons betrayed the angels at Pandemonium, Domiel was one of the few who made it back to the Dominion fortresses – but Oblurott ate him.

Oblurott was not notably more powerful than other demons but it was smarter and knew enough of Domiel's secrets to win the support of other hellkin. It knew where the vaults of iliaster were and the secrets of the fortresses. Within a few months, Oblurott had an army of demons behind it. Domiel's fortress grew and grew as Oblurott's followers crowded in and emulated their corpulent king.

Oblurott's ambition was limitless. It declared itself Domiel's heir and Lord of a House, and claimed all the Third Circle as its domain. It sent servants down the Pit to claim the throne in Pandemonium, but they were rebuffed by the other Houses and eventually settled for taking one of the nine unoccupied Citadels on the Eighth Circle.

Soon after, Haimon declared itself a Great House in opposition to Oblurott. The Gross Lord recognised that it would have to work swiftly to maintain its advantage over the rest of the demons. It assembled the first House army and sent them down to take Pandemonium. Fiends and imps flew out of the Citadel Oblurott to resupply the army with food and bottled iliaster as they marched. A Lord of the Seventh Circle, the great deceiver Jelac, assembled an army to stop the Oblurotts – and so the succession war for Lucifer's throne began.

The next century saw a decline in the Oblurott's fortunes – or a degeneration in the Oblurott themselves. While the House was still the most numerous and perhaps the richest (until Carthenay claimed House status, anyway), they repeatedly failed to use their might effectively. They failed to crush both Haimon and Glabretch as the rich Third Circle was carved up. They expanded into the Fourth Circle only slowly and never bothered to do anything with the Inferno Line in the Second.

House Oblurott turned inwards, become more degenerate and hedonistic. Oblurott had feasted on the waste from Domiel's table; now the wealthiest demon in Hell had a far larger banquet each night. When mortals were captured by the demons, their flesh was found to be sweeter than anything naturally occurring in Hell. While the other Houses made weapons and fortresses, the Oblurott made farms and feasts. Mortals may look at the indulgences of the Riethii or the Astyanath and shudder, but the most

ghastly excesses began here in House Oblurott.

It was not until the Bileflot Conclave and the death of its possessed host that Oblurott took the military seriously again. The elder Oblurott were too fat to fight, so the House turned its agricultural expertise to the breeding of spawn, and created the first demonic cavalry. Fortunately, the House had time to develop and train its new armies, as the war that engulfed the Pit was initially concentrated in the Lower Hells.

Eventually, though, the victorious army of House Sturrach pushed their way through the Fourth Circle and threatened the heartlands of the Oblurott. The armies met them at the bridges over the Acheron and held the Bloody demons back. In later years, House Haimon would take the credit for turning the tide against House Sturrach, but it was the Oblurotts that fought them to a standstill at the bridges and bled them dry of power.

When the Sturrachs eventually broke the first lines through superiority in the air, they were harassed by the cavalry all the way to the Oblurott fortresses. The Oblurotts had once again failed to defeat their foes, but they had given a better account of themselves against the Bloody army than any of the other Houses. Oblurott's personal fortress – once the home of Domiel – was besieged and the demon slain. It is possible that the Oblurotts could have broken the siege and rescued their Lord, but it was every Grand Duke for itself in the wake of the Sturrach invasion.

The Sturrachs retreated from the Third Circle after the Battle of the Ash Ghosts and other clashes with the Legions of the Damned, but it was the Oblurott, not the Haimon, who pursued the retreating army and gobbled up the territory they left behind. The Oblurotts still suffered losses in the war, but their innate hunger left them in a better position than most.

The next century was a time of often literal regeneration for House Oblurott. Their armies were rebuilt – and as only House Sturrach and their traditional rivals Glabretch and Haimon had faced Oblurott aggression in the past, they were usefully underestimated by Carthenay and Zethu as those Houses expanded up and met the Oblurott coming down.

Current Standing

House Oblurott has comfortably settled into being second-best at everything. They may not be as politically adept as the Astyanath or as good at spying as the Riethii, but they have an excellent network of agents in the Lower Hells and are also experts at possession. Their armies have never been as strong of those of the Sturrach or Haimon, but they can hold



their own in combat and can devour lesser Houses like plankton before a whale. They may not be as innovative or sorcerous as the Zethu or Glabretch, but the Oblurott are no slouches when it comes to breeding new war-spawn or creating living farms in Hell.

The chief weakness of the Oblurott is their appetites. The House's consumption is nothing short of terrifying. The Oblurott would eat themselves out of House and fortress if they did not keep conquering new territories and new sources of power and wealth. While there was plenty of unclaimed power in the Infernum in the aftermath of the war, the Oblurott are now running out of easy targets. The lesser Houses they once preyed on are now mostly part of the upstart House Lictat, meaning that the Oblurott cannot feast freely on them. The House's recent daring expansion into the Fourth Circle against House Sturrach is a sign of their reduced options (it has been suggested that this move also prevents the Free Cities from being conquered by Sturrach, leaving them open to Oblurott consumption).

Culture and Customs

House Oblurott is the oldest of the demon Houses, and

is loath to let anyone forget that fact. Let the Riethii or the Astyanath style themselves the aristocracy of Hell; the Oblurott were there first. Theirs is the old ichor, the old money, the old grandeur. For all their grossness and coarse attitudes, even the most filthy Oblurott wallowing in its own mess can pull its spine straight and take on the bearing of a king. This fact ranks especially with House Astyanath, who for all their elegance and terrible grace cannot approach the majesty of angels.

The customs of the Oblurott, then, are partially derived from angelic sources. Oblurott itself learned them from Dmiel, after all, and passed them onto its followers. Salutations and titles are given in the angelic tongue, Enochian for example, and Grand Dukes are more commonly referred to as Archdukes. The Head of the House is called the Most High in some official documents.

For all their angelic terms, however, the Oblurotts are demons through and through. Consumption and cruelty are traits to be praised; the Oblurotts feast constantly, each trying to outdo its fellows in gorging itself on the richest, most sickening foods. 'Demonic hippopotami at a Roman orgy' as one notable description goes, although that does not even half cover the clamour, the stench and the overwhelming sense of hateful competition that makes up an Oblurott banquet.

Another trait valued by the House is conspicuous and cunning laziness. The demons know they were bred to be soldiers in an angelic war on Heaven, and so they take great pride in being as unsuited as possible for this role. Being too heavy to walk is a sign of good breeding, while using a thousand slaves to do a task instead of lifting a single finger is seen as a magnificent example of glorious indolence. Obviously, the Oblurott military does not wholly subscribe to this tradition in the lower ranks, but the wastefulness of their generals and warlords is famed across the Pit.

Much of House Oblurott's influence comes from supplying souls to the rest of Hell. When Haimon and Glabretch both sat sullenly within their borders, Oblurott slavers and stalkers were gathering souls from all over Upper Hell and selling them down to Carthenay merchants.

The Oblurott are also the farmers and horse-breeders of the demon world. Their estates consist of vast farmlands, tilled but also fertilised by the dead. Souls are buried in the mud to sustain the plants and the spawn that feed from them.

Holdings

The farmlands of House Oblurott are located on the fertile Third Circle, but the House has numerous estates on the Second where souls are gathered, as well as mines on the Fourth and fortresses on the First and Fifth. The House has also expanded out from its Citadel in the Malebolge, which it held almost from its founding. Oblurott's Seventh Circle holdings cannot equal those of the Lower Hell Houses, but they are not insignificant.

Notable holdings of the Oblurott include the landlocked Sea of Tears and its surrounding Duchy Lachrimae, the Arch-Duchy of Romaldo, the fleshpits of the Viscounty of Brall and the rich farmland and hunting grounds of the Duchy of Moralt.

Notable Members

The Oblurott leadership is somewhat divided, with numerous powerful Dukes and Grand Dukes vying for influence. This hungry competition has pushed the House to launch its current risky ventures, like the invasion of the Sturrach holdings on the Fourth.

Hurgblotten

The current Head of the Oblurott is Hurgblotten, also known as the butcher of Hell. He commanded the Oblurott armies at the bridges when they held back the Sturrach legions and used his remaining troops to claim the throne after Oblurott's death. He has ruled the House since then, although his initial unassailable position has been eaten away and now he must rely on the good favours of a coalition of a dozen Dukes and Archdukes.

Grumuluch

Duke Grumuluch is the pre-eminent spawn-breeder among the Oblurott, and the creatures produced on its estates are valued all over the Pit. Its secret involves adding human stock to the spawning pits when creating new spawn. Grumuluch's chief rival is the Earl of Dogs, who has taken the Chain of the Mount to an extreme and bonded itself with half-a-dozen hellhounds.

Others

Other nobles of House Oblurott are Mudger of the Pot, who keeps a forty-foot wide cauldron full of broiling souls constantly suspended by chains above the flaming sea, reeling it in from time to time so that his kin can sample it with long ladles; Kithlubbin,

who lives at the bottom of a rubbish chute once occupied by Oblurott itself as he is content to gorge himself on the scraps that others throw away; The Lobbigus, an Oblurott Lord so obese that he has to be wheeled around in a converted chariot drawn by bearded devils; and the most gloriously overweight female Oblurott of all, Rosa, who is the consort of Howling Aengus of House Sturrach.

Noble Mutations

House Oblurott has three noble mutation chains.

Chain of the Hungry Lord

The classic chain of Oblurott nobility, this chain concentrates on eating one's subjects.

I – Devour Others: The demon can now swallow creatures that are smaller than it whole. This can only be done to unresisting or helpless targets. The swallowed creature cannot escape unless the demon is breached or killed. The victim suffers 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round, and the demon gains an equal amount of iliaster each round.



to half the level of a creature just consumed using the Devour Others link, the demon gains temporary access to the memories of that victim. The demon may ask one question per level of those memories before they are forgotten.

This link carries a drawback; the demon becomes even more grotesquely fat. Its flying speed is reduced by one-third and its base movement is reduced by 10 feet.

III – Devour the Face (Shapeshift): For a number of days equal to its level, the demon gains the ability to shapeshift into a creature it just consumed using the Devour Others link. The cost for this shapeshifting is calculated as normal for a shapeshift (see Shapeshift, page 190 in *Book of the Damned*).

IV – Devour the Mind: The demon can now consume skills and feats from creatures it consumes using the Devour Others link. The demon must pay one iliaster per skill rank and three iliaster per feat, and can retain these stolen skills and feats for one day per level. A demon cannot add skill ranks from different meals together, nor can it add skill ranks to skills it already possesses for itself (i.e. a demon who eats two souls, one of whom has five ranks in Diplomacy, the other of whom has nine ranks could have a maximum of nine ranks in Diplomacy, and could not add the five ranks onto the nine).

Chain of Dionysus

The poetically-named Chain of Dionysus refers to the Oblurott's habit of indulgence and intoxication. It is known as the Vine Chain in other places.

I – Vine Covering (Physical, Exclusivity: Hide): The demon's hide sprouts thousands of green shoots which quickly turn into thick grape vines. Each day, these vines effectively give the demon 20 bonus hit points. Furthermore, the demon can spend one iliaster to animate the vines for one round, to give it a +4 bonus to a grapple check or to act as an extra limb that can take actions but cannot attack.

II – Sprout Fruit: The demon can make grapes and other fruit grow from its body. Each fruit costs one iliaster to grow. A fruit can contain iliaster drawn from the demon's own reserve, or can work the same way as the first link in the Chain of Gifts (see page 201 in *Book of the Damned*). Alternatively, a creature who eats a fruit can be made intoxicated; the creature must make a Fortitude save or suffer a -2 penalty to all skill rolls, attack rolls and saving throws for 1d4 hours. Making an intoxicating fruit costs one extra

iliaster.

This link carries a drawback; the demon must spend one hour per day rooted into the soul, or its iliaster requirement is increased by 50%.

III – Tied to the Land (Blasphemous): The demon can use its vines to infuse its essence into its domain. If a creature has eaten food grown in that domain within the last 24 hours, the demon can spend iliaster equal to that creature's level to force that creature into a Covenant of Strength 10 + 1d10 or expose it to Corruption of SR10 + 1d10.

Chain of the Mud King

The Mud King chain is obviously a result of the Oblurott making their home in the swampy Third Circle; the muddy ground can be manipulated by a demon ruler.

I – Shape the Soil: The demon may spend one iliaster to gain the ability to reshape mud for ten minutes. When this time elapses, the shaped mud becomes hard as stone. This mutation can be used to construct stone buildings and other structures out of easily-moulded mud.

II – Swallowing Mud: The demon can cause the mud around it to become boggy and drag victims down into the mire. Activating this mutation is a swift action and costs six iliaster. The demon must be within its domain. Any creature within reach of the demon begins to sink. A creature is allowed a Reflex save to find safe footing in the mud this round. If the saving throw is failed, the creature begins to sink. A creature sinks and begins to drown after a number of rounds equal to 3 + its Size Modifier. A sinking creature can make a Strength or Escape Artist check to pull itself free, at a DC of 10 + ½ the demon's level plus its Constitution modifier. As a free action, the demon may spend one iliaster to increase the DC by +2 for one escape attempt. The sinking effect lasts for ten minutes, but does not move with the demon.

This link carries a drawback; the demon's movement outside muddy terrain is reduced by 10 feet.

III – Flow like Mud (Physical 2): The demon's body transmutes to become made of mud. The demon becomes immune to critical hits. When attacked by a melee or ranged weapon that is not an area effect or splash weapon, it may spend one iliaster to make a Reflex save at a DC equal to the attack roll. If this Reflex save is successful, the demon takes half damage from the attack as its fluid body flows out of

the way.

Secrets of House Oblurott

House Oblurott's secrets are mostly rather obvious, but are still unique to the House.

Gorging

The Oblurott habit of mixing spawnmeat and other foodstuffs with their iliaster is not a mere affectation; it can be used to strengthen the demon's capacity to retain power. An Oblurott may increase its iliaster reserve by +1 if it increases its daily iliaster requirement by +3. There is no limit to the demon's reserve and requirement increase through gorging; there are Lords with a reserve 10 points greater than average and a daily requirement 30 points greater.

Vomit Trumpets

These curious and alarmingly vile devices work like hell cannons, but draw on the iliaster and stomach acid of the Oblurott. A vomit trumpet costs twice as much as a hellcannon, but inflicts an acidic form of hellfire damage. Craft (hellfire) cannot be used with a vomit trumpet. Acid damage from a vomit trumpet still burns iliaster away, just like normal hellfire.

The Harvest of Souls

The Oblurott practise of farming based on buried souls has, in one duchy at least, borne strange fruit. They have succeeded into producing new souls from old ones. These unborn souls are weaker and thinner than normal damned, but they could be a significant new source of power for the Oblurott. The Lord of the duchy, Lady Comardi, has not revealed her discovery to the other demons of the House, preferring to study this new phenomenon first.

House Riethii

Why do you deny yourself the pleasures we offer you? Why hold back from yourself? Give in to yourself, give unto us. We want you, crave you, and we know you need us just as much. Let your restraint and foolish fears go. Just be with us, in us, through us, forever and ever.

History

It is fitting that the history of the House of Seducers be dominated by a searing episode of lust that lasted for centuries. When the House was founded, though, one of the two partners in this dance of desire was still in Heaven and would not fall for many long ages of the world.

The other, and founder of House Riethii, was Riethii herself. She was one of the first of the malcubi, and she and her sister Soline quickly outstripped their siblings in beauty and desirability. The true corruption of the fallen angels stems, it is said, from the creation of the succubi. Suddenly, conquering Heaven and continuing the rebellion seemed like such a pale and pointless goal compared to the delights and entertainments of the hellkin. Riethii and Soline became the favoured concubines of the angels, especially those of the Thrones and even Lucifer's Archangels.

While neither was confessor to an angel as Oblurott was, both learned much of the inner workings of Pandemonium while they pleased the Fallen. When the rebellion came, both were instrumental in telling the other demons about the numbers and relative strengths of the Fallen. Together, Soline and Riethii fled the field of battle and assembled a retinue of demonic followers. With these, they swiftly conquered key sites throughout the Seventh Circle. The equal partnership of the two powerful succubi seemed unstoppable.

When the assembled new Lords of Hell decided to investigate Pandemonium, either Soline or Riethii was an obvious choice. Soline chose to go, and slipped away into the night with the other spies. She was the only one to return from the city, and then only to give two messages. One message was the ultimatum she delivered to the Lords of Hell, telling them to pay a tithe of iliaster to the Morningstar or plunge Hell into eternal darkness. The second was a private farewell to her sister, for the two demons never saw each other again.

Riethii's House grew and grew over the next few decades. She could easily seduce almost any demon, stealing their loyalty and adding their estates to her own. She built a fortress on the shores of the Sunless Sea and called it Despair as some private joke. Riethii abandoned that fortress in a few years when she moved to the Citadel on the Eighth Circle, but her old home swiftly grew into Port Despair and proved the foundation of the Riethii's expansion along the waterways and fireways. This strategy suffered a tremendous setback when mysterious raiders from the far side of the ocean attacked their vessels and the Port, but this eventually proved to be an advantage; the Riethii's navy was rebuilt to be considerably stronger to fight this new threat.

The House was forced to expand along the tunnels and waterways, for it was trapped in Lower Hell. The Sixth and Upper Circles were already being claimed

by rising powers like Carthenay and Oblurott, so the Riethii took little part in the Grasping War. Instead, they became the greatest political and social movers in the Infernum. The parties and orgies of the House of Seducers drew the demons together better than any Haimon or Carthenay legislature ever could. Riethii was the Queen of Hell, the one demon feared, respected and loved by them all.

Then came the first Brokenlander attack, and the disastrous Bileflot Conclave. The Pit seemed poised for war.

The angel Purity fell in 350 AF, the first angel seen in the Pit since the revolt. Riethii had had thousands of bed-mates since then, but she still desired the touch of an angel. Oblurott and Haimon armies clashed over the fallen, but it was Riethii herself who stole Purity away. The Demon Queen and the angel vanished from the sight of the rest of the Infernum for years. When Purity was seen again, it was as Riethii's warlord and chief consort.

One of her malcubi stole sorcery from one of Zethu's pet mortals, and the House used it with wicked effectiveness. House Jelac fell to the Riethii army, led by the warrior angel Purity. The Seducers had played for long enough; now it was time to conquer. For a brief time, their rise seemed unstoppable as the Riethii swallowed up the Jelac territory and pressed on that of the Carthenay and Zethu.

Houses Sturrach and Carthenay turned on them, smashing the Riethii armies back. The Riethii fought valiantly, but they were outnumbered and outclassed. Riethii had the choice between a smooth retreat back to their domain, or trying to hold both her territory and that of House Jelac. She chose poorly. The Riethii army was spread too thinly and crushed; Purity managed to salvage some of his troops by evacuating them by sea.

While Purity took charge of the army, Riethii managed to persuade House Astyanath to ally with the Riethii, promising them many of the treasures taken from House Jelac, access to the Riethii ports and shipyards, souls, concubines, and the secrets of the Riethii spy network. The Rose Accord allowed the Riethii to hold onto some of their winnings, and gave the Astyanath some warning of what they would face.

House Sturrach occupied much of the remaining Riethii territory. The Seducers captured behind were either thrown into the spawning pits, or forced to make the best of things with their conquerors. For

them – and the rest of the House – the war was over.

At some point between the conquest of the Riethii lands and the Battle of Ash Ghosts, Riethii was replaced as Head of the House by her lover Purity. It is generally assumed that he killed her for her failure in managing the defence of their conquests, although Purity never spoke of it. He just took the throne, and none of the other demons dared cross the mighty angel.

The first great challenge faced by the angel was the destruction of the troubled Port Despair by the Behemoth invasion. It was believed the abhorei were responsible for the attack, so a joint Riethii/Astyanath fleet launched a punitive retaliation. It was a glorious victory for the House. By the time the armada returned, news was already spreading that the Sturrach could be beaten. Riethii returned to the war, reinvigorated and eager for vengeance. They retook all they had lost and more.

Then, the Riethii turned inwards once again. Just as the founder had done before him, Purity oversaw a renaissance of Riethii art and culture – which amounted to vast parties, grotesque corruptions, and an exploration of every unholy delight to find something the Riethii had not tried before. The noble Houses were enraptured all over again by the Riethii and the Rose Accord, giving the Seducers ever-increasing political power.

Current Standing

The Riethii are the arbiters of taste (or the lack thereof) and fashion in the Infernum. Riethii advisors and entertainers are in every court of note in the Pit; even Houses like the Haimon who have no interest or love for anything the Riethii offer are forced by convention to have at least a few courtiers hanging around the ossuaries. Politically, only the Astyanath come close to the Riethii's level of influence; this influence is not based purely on seduction, as the Riethii are masters of the arts of intrigue, blackmail and diplomacy.

The Riethii's other great strength is their intelligence gathering; none of the other Houses have spies who are half as stealthy or as cunning as those who serve the Black Rose.

Economically, the Riethii are moderately secure. While they have few soul fields or torture palaces and must purchase much of their iliaster, they have a trading network second only to that of House Carthenay. The backbone of this network is their

shipping fleet and Port Despair.

The final aspect of any ruling House, the military, is Riethii's weak spot. The House is not as weak as some might think – it has fine duellists and excellent aerial warriors, but few shock troops like hulks. It must supplement its own forces with mercenaries, but as Sturrach's War proved, Riethii's coffers are nowhere near as deep as Carthenay's.

Culture and Customs

Shock and excess are the chief customs of the Riethii. The Lords of the House compete to find perversions and grotesqueries that have not been done before. Many but by no means all of these are sexual in nature; a Riethii can win fame and renown through an interesting surgical mutilation of a mortal or by a wild party or through art.

Each Riethii Lord has a great deal of independence; only the Oblurott have more freedom on their estates. The Riethii nobility are insanely popular and are treated like celebrities instead of taskmasters by lesser demons. This means, of course, that the competition for places in the Riethii nobility is even more bitter than in the other Houses; assassinations and murders are commonplace in the backstairs and servant's quarters of the Rose mansions, and more than a few battles have been lost when a Daemon made a position open up by letting its Captain die.

The Riethii purchase much of their iliaster, so they use many of their damned as playthings. The malleable plasmic bodies of the souls afford much opportunity for sport, and the dead are almost as tireless as their Riethii tormentors. Mortals are even more fun, as their passions, instincts and their morals can be played like instruments.

Holdings

While the most famous of the Riethii holdings are their pleasure-estates on the Seventh Circle, many of their most important domains are actually outside the Pit altogether. Port Despair and the industrial cities along the Sunless Sea are the iron backbone of the Riethii economy that pays for the social whirl.

The Riethii estates are undeniably magnificent and lush; great ornamental gardens watered by mortal blood and erotic statues of black basalt divide one vast fortress from another. Important domains include the Grand Duchy of the Infernal Shore, the Sraidan Duchy and the Mountains of Asili.

Their Citadel, Riethii's Chalice, is the most richly

decorated and glittering of all the halls of Hell. By tradition, visitors there must wear masks; the current fashion is for biomechanical masks made by the Zethu, but Purity keeps the ancient mask of demonhide he made by hand in centuries past.

Notable Members

The Riethii's fame among all the Houses of the Infernum means that individual Lords are especially well known. Most demons in the Lower Hell could sooner name a Duke of the Riethii than they could name the Glabretch or the Haimon.

The Angel Purity

The first of the newfallen, Purity's name is ironic given the angel's utter corruption. He is perhaps the cruellest of the Lords of Hell; under his guidance, House Riethii has risen swiftly out of the ashes. Since Riethii's death, he has taken no lovers and has not indulged in any pleasures; he oversees the Riethii celebrations, but takes no part in them. He delights only in inflicting pain, especially on other demons. Purity is also the founder of the Heirs of the Fallen, a league of angels who follow the rebellious beliefs of Lucifer. Most of their Heirs are members of the Riethii or Astyanath thanks to Purity's patronage.

Lady Barbellion

Another succubus noble, Barbellion was influential within the House before Purity's arrival. Many saw her as the replacement for the lost Soline, and the likely heir to Riethii. When the angel took the throne, Barbellion was driven mad with jealousy. If the angel refuses the pleasures of the Pit, then Barbellion more than makes up for him. She is constantly drunk and has fornicated with every type of creature known in Hell and others dragged from other realms through sorcery. Barbellion occasionally launches some plot or revolt against Purity, but none has managed to endanger the angel Lord.

Others

Other renowned members of House Riethii are Duke Radamanthus, who specialises in recruiting the young of the mortal world to the cause of Hell, promising them debauchery and wild parties with the help of his pretty sisters, then revealing the true horrors of the Hell that they have condemned themselves to; Madame Japusca, who collects the souls of murdered harlots who died with evil still in their hearts; and Lord Kavalon, who might be called the patron devil of misunderstood young poets and tempts the lonely and unloved into committing suicide.



Noble Mutations

House Riethii has three noble chains.

Chain of Abandon

This useful chain is used by both courtiers and warriors; the Riethii exist on instinct, in the space where decision and action exist without thought.

I – Scent of the Rose (Mind-Affecting): This mutation improves on the Riethii ability to breathe out a mind-dulling gas (see the Sweet-Smelling Vapours link in the Riethii House chain). The penalty applied to Will saves and Concentration checks is increased to –4.

This link carries a drawback; the Riethii suffers a permanent –4 penalty to all Concentration checks.

II – Freedom of Abandonment (Mental): The Riethii can now become affected by its own vapours. If it breathes in its Sweet-Smelling Vapours, it can temporarily decrease its own Wisdom score to increase its Strength, Dexterity, Constitution or Charisma. This change lasts for ten minutes.

III – Flesh-Warping Joy (Physical): The Riethii's freedom to express its lust now transforms its body. Its limbs flow like liquid as it forgets its shape. Entering this state costs five iliaster and is a swift action. Flesh-Warping Joy lasts for ten minutes, during which time the Riethii gains a +4 bonus to its Dexterity, a further +4 bonus to Escape Artist and Perform checks, and can use any mutations that call for Exclusivity without penalty – it can mix different Exclusivity (limb) or (hide) abilities, for example.

IV – Heedless (Mental): By spending another five iliaster when entering Flesh-Warping Joy, the demon can extend its effects to its mind. No Psychic or Mind-Affecting ability can affect the demon for more than 1d6 rounds for the duration of Flesh-Warping Joy.

Chain of the Harlot

The Harlot Chain improves on the abilities common to the succubi and the Riethii themselves, but extends it to the noble's whole domain.

I – Adulation of the Masses (Mind-Affecting): The demon can use its seductive abilities on whole crowds of people at once, making them love or desire the demon above all other things. The demon must spend one iliaster per target, but may then make a Seduction-based influencing check as normal. The targets must be able to see the demon, but need not interact with it in any other way.

II.I – Succubus Transfer: The demon may now spend ten iliaster to teleport to anywhere in its domain where there is a sleeping creature that the demon has encountered before.

II.II – Bonds of Desire: The demon may spend ten iliaster after successfully seducing a creature to create a Strength 10 Covenant debt between the creature and the demon.

III – Lust Proxy: Lust Proxy allows the demon to create a supernatural link between two creatures.

By spending iliaster equal to the level of a target that the demon is aware of and who is currently within the demon's domain, and by touching another creature, the demon makes a creature into a lust proxy for the target. Anything the demon does to that creature using any Seduction or touch-based attacks is transferred to the original target. The original target may make a Will save after each Seduction or touch-based attack; if the saving throw is successful, the link is broken. For example, a demon could channel the

Riethii House Mutation of Drain Strength or Riethii's Embrace through the link – the demon seduces the Lust Proxy, but it is the far-off target of the ability who suffers the Strength drain or Corruption of the Embrace.

IV – Rapacious Spirit: The demon can now activate the Drain Strength link of the Riethii House Chain and the Succubus Kiss link of the Chain of Lust for free while within its domain.

Chain of Whispers

The Chain of Whispers is the mutation set used by the spymasters of House Riethii.

I – Piercing Gaze and Keen Ears (Physical): The demon's eyes and ears grow larger and sharper. This gives it a +2 racial bonus to Spot and Listen checks. Furthermore, it may spend one iliaster as a free action to make a Listen check at the same time it makes a Sense Motive check. If either check beats an opponent's Bluff check, the demon senses the other character is lying.

II – Mark the Whisperers (Psychic): By touching a creature who owes it a Covenant and spending three iliaster, the demon can mark that creature with a secret brand. This brand is visible only to the demon and other creatures who bear that brand. While a creature bears this brand, it can spend one iliaster to allow the demon to hear the creature's spoken words for one round (six seconds). Similarly, the demon can spend one iliaster to allow any single creature who bears its brand to hear its words for one round. By spending iliaster in this fashion, the two can communicate.

Note that other creatures present can hear one side of the conversation; someone in the demon's presence when a brand is activated would hear the demon's responses, but not the words of the character who activated the brand.

III – Sight of their Eyes (Psychic): By spending three iliaster, the demon can see through the eyes of a creature who bears its brand for one minute. The brand burns and glows while this mutation is in effect. The demon can see its own surroundings clearly while using this mutation.

IV.I – Cast Aside: Sometimes, even the best spy must be sacrificed. As the interrogators and mind-twisters of the Pit are second to none when it comes to extracting what secrets a spy has learned, the Riethii prefer to destroy their captured agents. When this mutation is activated, the demon may spend any

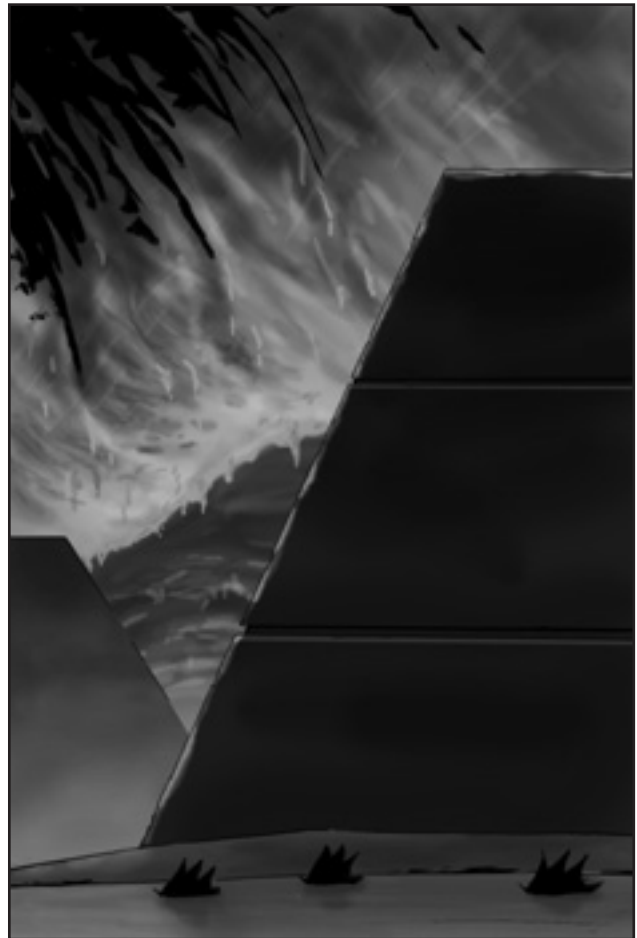
amount of iliaster. Each point of iliaster spent deals 1d6 points of damage to a branded creature. No saving throw is allowed, but activating this mutation destroys the brand connecting the two creatures.

IV.II – All Secrets Revealed (Psychic, Mind-Affecting): The demon can enforce truth on other creatures. The demon may spend a point of iliaster to give a –2 penalty to a target creature's Bluff check. The demon must target the creature, who must be within sight of the demon. Activating this mutation is a move action; the demon may spend any amount of iliaster in this fashion. If the Bluff check result fails by five or more, the target inadvertently blurts out a truth it was trying to conceal.

This link carries a drawback; the demon becomes a thing of lies, and loses 2d6 iliaster whenever it tells the truth in response to a question.

Secrets of House Riethii

The House of the Seducers is best at worming secrets out of others, but has more than a few of its own.



The Black Shore

Riethii's ships are the masters of the Sunless Sea; while they cannot match the power of the *Dreadnought*, they sail farther and faster than those of any other House or the abhorei. In their explorations of the deep channels beyond the shores of Abhor, they discovered another great sea linking to a cavern almost the size of the Pit. Exploration of this new shore has only just begun, but the Riethii have discovered great green ziggurats and tombs of surpassing antiquity.

The Labyrinth of the Eighth

The Riethii delight in labyrinths and mazes, considering them the highest form of their art. Their greatest achievement in this art, however, is a secret from the rest of the Pit. For centuries, the Riethii have been digging a tunnel network through the mountains of the Malebolge. This great labyrinth has so far gone unnoticed by the other Houses, but as they delve beneath their own Citadels, they will surely uncover some sign of the maze. It allows those who know its secrets to walk from one side of the Eighth to the other without being seen, and could enable the Riethii to sneak an army of assassins into the grounds of another House Citadel.

The Marriage of Barbellion

Barbellion, the drunken princess of the Riethii, has been promised to the Head of House Astyanath for decades to seal the Rose Accord between the two Houses. The current Head of the Cruel House, Irania, is not opposed to this union, but both Barbellion and Irania are known for killing their partners. Furthermore, the marriage would doom Barbellion's hopes of replacing Purity as the Head of House Riethii. The marriage has been stalled for some time, as Barbellion tries to find another Grand Duke of the Riethii willing to be wed to the Black Widow of Hell.

The Ambassador for the Broken Cosmos

For their own inscrutable reasons, the Brokenlanders send ambassadors to Hell. These are tolerated for their sorcerous knowledge. The current ambassador is a Sciage (see page 193) called (as near as can be determined) 'As Silver Wakes Forty-One'. Strangely, the creature seems fascinated by the Riethii, especially the Riethii Hierarch Duke Radamanthus. If a Brokenlander with all its bizarre and powerful insight could be seduced to join the Riethii cause, it could be as big a swing in the balance of power as the occasion

when another Riethii Lord seduced a sorceress.

House Sturrach

Violence is not a way of life; it is life. To be is to struggle. The strong thrive, the weak are consumed and destroyed. We fight with death, we bring death, so that we may live.

We offer you no quarter, no mercy, no chance to survive. We shall live, and you shall die. All you may do is run and give us an appetite after the victory.

History

The first demons were seen as failures by their angelic sires. The First Fallen needed an army to retake Heaven; what they got was a litter of hideous mutant freaks. Some of these demons were horribly bloated and ugly, others scrawny and weak. Only a few showed promise as troops, and most of those were near-mindless carnivores with no aptitude for tactics or discipline.

The angel Arikiba was Lucifer's general. It is said Arikiba had such a mastery of the art of war that he joined the rebellion not out of agreement with Lucifer's beliefs, but because he wanted the challenge of outmanoeuvring and defeating all the hosts of Heaven. Arikiba was assigned the duty of turning this demonic rabble into an army. The warrior angel was disgusted by the raw materials he had to work with, and swiftly lost patience with the demons. Any failure on the part of a brigade of recruits resulted in Arikiba dispatching lesser angels with flaming swords to destroy the demons.

In the forty-second year after the Fall, Arikiba received word that one host of demons was insubordinate and troublesome. He treated the report the same way he dealt with any other failure on the part of his demon recruits – angels were sent out to destroy the disobedient demons. This time, however, the angels returned scarred and broken and confessed that the demons had defeated them. Arikiba's interest was piqued; for the first time, he had trainees worth his time. The angel flew out to that isolated training camp and demanded that the leader of the insubordinate demons face him in single combat.

Sturrach stepped forward. The two fought and the angel won, but the demon had won Arikiba's respect. Here, at last, was a creature with the strength and skill to conquer Heaven for the host. As the armies of Hell grew, Sturrach was ever at his mentor's side, learning

every tactic and trick Arikiba could teach him. Of all the demons, Sturrach was perhaps closest in the angels' confidences (although paramours like Soline and Riethii, and advisors like Zethu or Astyanath were also given special treatment by the Fallen).

In 141 AF, Arikiba was ordered to bring the Dominions back under the Thrones' command. In an unprecedented move, Arikiba set Sturrach over other angels and gave the demon the task of building and training the armies of Hell. While Arikiba built its Hold and conquered the outer marches of Hell, Sturrach drilled and trained the armies with the same iron discipline he learned from his mentor.

When the demons revolted, Sturrach marched at the head of his armies. It was Arikiba who suggested the Thrones demand the iliaster stores of all Hell, and it was Arikiba who gave the final command of the Throne. The voice of his mentor made Sturrach raise his arm – but it was the demon's own will that spat a blast of hellfire at the angel. The duel of Sturrach and Arikiba is still one of the most famous clashes in the history of Hell. That initial treacherous blow gave Sturrach the edge and for the first time the student defeated the master.

After breaking Arikiba's back, Sturrach and his shock troops rampaged through the battlefields. Fiends dragged angels screaming from the sky and hulks smashed their shining bodies into pulp. It was not a revolt; it was a slaughter.

Sturrach was the mightiest of the demons, but he was always identified with the old regime. Every demon in Hell knew that Sturrach was the chosen servant of the angelic Lords, and the Bloody Lord's refusal to hand the corpse of Arikiba over to the rendering pits of Carthenay was seen as a sign of misplaced loyalty. Only a handful of demons would stand with Sturrach; nowhere near enough to make a claim on Pandemonium. The former general of all the demons was forced to become a common mercenary.

Sturrach's tenure with Jelac and later Carthenay was an unremarkable string of brilliant victories and successful campaigns. The demon spent much of its pay claiming and defending Arikiba's Hold on the Fifth Circle, which was renamed Sturrach's Hold. After the first few campaigns, the demon relied on its troops to fight for it and left the Hold only to deal with particularly powerful or stubborn foes.

In 251AF, Sturrach conquered much of the Fifth Circle and was recognised as a House; the old fears about the demon's loyalty to the angels had long since

been washed away by ichor. Soon after, the Pit was invaded for the first time by the Brokenlanders. At the Bileflot Conclave, Sturrach advocated an alliance under his rule to deal with the threat; the demons quibbled and stalled, which enraged the Bloody Lord. He killed Astyanath, impaling the beast on Arikiba's old sword, and smashed Oblurott's fat body open with a single punch.

The stage was set for Sturrach's War. The only event of note before that was the birth of Sturrach's daughter Ashen to a succubus of the House.

The history of the war is told elsewhere from the perspective of the other Houses, and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say, the armies of the Bloody House chewed up everything the rest of the Infernum could put before them and carved out a domain from the shadows of the Malebolge to the shores of Acheron. Sturrach destroyed Carthenay, Lictat and possibly Zethu personally, but the last cost the greatest demon of all his life.

Ashen took over command of the armies, but she was a shadow of her sire. The conquests continued for a time, but it was only a matter of time before a disaster occurred. The armies crumbled and House Sturrach was beaten. The utter collapse of the Sturrach after the Battle of Ash Ghosts is a curious thing; the other Houses seemed to know exactly where to hit the retreating Bloody Army. The retreat became a rout.

Ashen was replaced by Urgal, a hulk of common spawning. The House retreated to Sturrach's hold and began to rebuild. Fortunately, the only armies capable of conquering the Sturrachs' land were unwilling to leave the Third Circle, or still unready for invasion (like the Zethu biomechanicals). The Time of Chaos was especially hard on House Sturrach; the demons were demoralised and dissolute, the House's coffers and iliaster stockpiles were exhausted, and their defences were in tatters. The reconstruction was a long, slow process; if it were not for House Carthenay's intervention, the Bloody House might have collapsed into a dozen warring factions. That intervention did end, once and for all, any hopes of the Sturrach conquering Hell on their own. Any future victories would be victories built on Covenant and alliance.

Towards the end of the Age of Chaos, House Sturrach turned more and more towards becoming guards of the whole Pit. The House was eager to pit its rebuilt armies against invaders like the Brokenlanders or the Benandanti. In the end, though, it would be the upstart House Lictat and the threat of the Free Cities

that drew Sturrach's wrath. When Dis and Mayhem rebelled and turned their weapons on their masters, House Sturrach was first – before even House Zethu – to send troops to retake the cities.

House Oblurott took advantage of the Sturrach's distraction. They hired mercenaries to protect their own lands, then the Oblurott army struck down the Pit, taking many of House Sturrach's mines. Without Carthenay support, this would have been a crippling blow; as it is, it was merely devastating.

Once again, the Bloody House is at war, but for the first time, it is on the defensive.

Current Standing

Even at its lowest ebb, House Sturrach was still a formidable military power. Now, after centuries of rebuilding and reconstruction, the Bloody Army is once again the greatest force for war in the whole Pit. They are not quite the largest army; the Haimon have more souls, and the populous Riethii, Oblurott or Glabretch could theoretically muster more demons, but the Sturrach are the best trained and strongest. The Sturrach are masters of combined arms; fiendish cavalry disrupts enemy lines before the hulks charge in. Stalkers and vehicle-mounted artificers scout ahead and guard the flanks of the army, while slaver quartermasters ensure the army has enough iliaster and imps carry messages and scour the battlefield for spawn-worthy carcasses. In latter years, they have even integrated sorcery and modern weapons like artillery into their repertoire.

Politically, the Sturrach have always been sullen silent partners in the institutions of the Infernum. They have been outmanoeuvred and humiliated too many times before to trust politics, but they know the other Houses remember Sturrach's War. If the Bloody House is ever seen to step out of line, it will draw considerably greater repercussions than a similar crime by another House. They have their alliance with House Carthenay to balance the Rose Accord.

Economically, the House is weak. Its estates are concentrated on the Circle of Slaughter, which is rather lacking in important resources or soul fields. Its demons consume more iliaster than the House can produce, forcing it to rely on trade and mercenary work to provide for them all. It is rare for House Sturrach to be able to mount a war of conquest; it could take any fortress or domain it chose, but holding it is another matter.

Culture and Customs

The greatest strength of House Sturrach is their discipline. While the House is even more fractious and violent than the other demon Houses, all the Sturrach are part of the army. Once a commander has been appointed, its orders are followed unquestioningly. Promotion in House Sturrach is determined through victory in duels; most duels are contests of strength and combat skill, but the commanders are aware of the value of stealth, intelligence gathering, sorcery and so on, so not every Sturrach noble is a hulk, slaver or fiend (just the majority of them).

The other Houses have armies; House Sturrach *is* an army. All its influential nobles are commanders and warlords; the needs of the military dictate everything else. Even though the Sturrach can hardly feed their own demons, much of the House's iliaster is converted into Agony for healing in battle, Strain for their war machines and other hellbroths to augment their troops.

Military customs and discipline are everywhere in House Sturrach. Even their souls are marshalled in regiments to be marched into the torture palaces. Drumhead courts and brutal punishments for breaches of regulations or defying orders are common. The duel is the only form of appeal in the law of House Sturrach; as the House respects violence and strength, a demon – or even a mortal or soul – can overturn a decision if it can defeat a champion of the Court or commander.

Sturrachs are expected to contain their emotions, to be cold-hearted and implacable dealers of death instead of berserkers. This restraint is at odds with the demonic nature, which tends to result in the Sturrachs suppressing themselves for years before exploding in a white-hot spasm of rage (as Astyanath and Oblurott can certainly testify). The only permissible release of emotions is in the hunt, the only sport except duelling accepted by the Sturrach. Torturing for pleasure is seen as wasteful by the House, who insist that every resource must be conserved and used to further the war.

Holdings

House Sturrach's holdings are crowded into the war-torn Fifth Circle. The Fifth Circle has traditionally been the field of battle where the Houses resolve minor wars without endangering the industries and iliaster stocks of the Sixth or gardens of the Seventh. The Circle of Slaughter is awash with blood and iron, so much so that battlefield salvage and corpse



collecting are both significant parts of the Sturrach economy.

Each domain must support an army; indeed, different sections are named after the barony, viscounty, earldom, duchy or grand duchy that supports them (or, often, vice versa). The Battalion of Arioch hails from the earldom of Arioch, the Grand Duchy of Piled Skulls supports the Army of Piled Skulls. The Lord of the domain is usually the commander of that unit, although a Lord is permitted to appoint a warlord in its place.

Beyond the Fifth Circle, House Sturrach has minimal influence. There are the iron mines on the Fourth, but many of these were recently conquered by the Oblurots. There are also the so-called rearguard domains, little sections of other Houses' territory conquered in Sturrach's War and never reclaimed because the Bloody Army was dug in too deeply or the cost to drive them out outweighed the value of the domain. The other Houses are content to isolate and starve these little islands into oblivion. The Sturrach support these conquests using sorcery out of pride, but the Lord of a rearguard domain is expected to fend for itself most of the time.

Notable Members

While House Sturrach has produced some of the most powerful demons of the Pit, the reign of a Sturrach Lord tends to be much shorter than that of its peers in other Houses. Demons are immortal save through death by violence, and the Sturrach live for violence.

Blackwing

The sixth Head of House, but only the second fiend to rule House Sturrach, Blackwing incinerated the previous Lord of the House and took the throne. The former Grand Duke of Blackstone Keep is known for its ruthlessness – not an unusual trait in a Sturrach Lord, but Blackwing's willingness to sacrifice anything to attain its goals has worried some weak-stomached warriors within the Bloody ranks. The Lord is known to favour its fiendish brethren over all other breeds, which means that many hulks are being used as cannon fodder in the battles fought under Blackwing's direction.

Duke Zarov

The assassin Lord, Zarov is a hulk of great power. 'Assassin' is something of a misnomer; Zarov is simply a killing machine that keeps going until he kills his target. He seems to have little interest in politics, having found his place in the Duchy of Lashes and at the head of the elite Slaughterers, one of the toughest and most effective units in the Sturrach army. Zarov has served every Lord of the House since Sturrach himself with terrible efficiency and loyalty.

Macrogh

Another Grand Duke, and the highest-ranked artificer in the Sturrach, Macrogh has bonded itself to a huge and experimental mobile war-fortress. It is very hard to argue with several hundred tonnes of brass cannons and raging furnaces, so Macrogh has quickly risen through the ranks of the House. The artificer insists that conquering Dis and all its technological and industrial secrets is the key to restarting and winning Sturrach's War. The other Lords believe Macrogh is a gun-obsessed lunatic, but again, few of them have the courage and lack of sense needed to point that out to a living fortress.

Noble Mutations

Only one of the three Sturrach chains is related to actually ruling a domain; the others concentrate on military matters. A fourth chain, the Chain of the Conqueror, has been lost when all the demons bearing it were killed without spawning during the closing stages of the war. Should the House begin to expand

once more, the chain would manifest once more.

Chain of the Iron Tyrant

The Iron Tyrant chain allows the demon to wring every penny of wealth and drop of sweat out of its subjects.

I – Whips Are My Will (Psychic): All Torture checks made in the demon's domain gain a profane bonus equal to the demon's Charisma modifier. This mutation costs ten iliaster per day to maintain.

This link carries a drawback; the demon is prone to rages. If a creature fails to complete a task for the demon or rolls a one on a skill check in the demon's presence, the creature must immediately succeed at a Grovel check (DC 15) or the demon must use Punish the Insolent or attack it for 1d4+1 rounds immediately.

II – Punish the Insolent (Psychic): The demon's wrath is such that creatures in its domain are vulnerable to its anger. The demon may spend five iliaster when making an Intimidation check against a target who is currently within its domain's borders. That target takes damage equal to the difference in their Intimidation checks if the demon wins. Spending this iliaster is a free action.

III – Bonds of Iron: The demon's commands become binding. By investing iliaster in a command, the demon can make that command effectively bound by a Covenant, with the same penalties for disobeying as for disobeying a Covenanted task (see page 222, *Book of the Damned*). The target is permitted a Will save to resist. Every two points of iliaster spent increases the Covenant's Strength by +1; any amount of iliaster can be spent as a swift action in this fashion. This mutation only works within the demon's domain, and the Covenant only exists within the domain. This artificial Covenant does not count towards a demon's maximum number of Covenants.

Chain of the Throne of Skulls

The Throne of Skulls Chain allows a demon to profit from the devastation wreaked by its army.

I – A Taste for Blood (Physical): At the cost of one iliaster per three hit points, the demon may gain one temporary bonus hit point for every ten creatures killed by his army in the previous day. These temporary hit points last for a maximum of seven days.

This link carries a drawback; the demon's skin

becomes covered in gore, proportionate to the number of creatures killed at its command in the previous day.

II – Skulls of the Victims (Shapeshift): By spending iliaster equal to the one-third the level of a creature killed by the legions, the demon gains the ability to shapeshift into that creature. The creature must have been killed within the previous day, and the shapeshifting ability lasts for 24 hours.

III – Throne of Skulls (Blasphemous): At the cost of 20 iliaster per day, the demon may trap the souls taken by his army. Any mortal slain by a creature under the demon's command becomes a damned soul, which is instantly transported to the demon's side or a place it designated when this mutation is chosen.

Chain of the Warlord

The Warlord Chain is used by the demonic commanders of the Sturrach armies.

I – Master of War (Physical): The demon grows more imposing and terrible. Great spikes and curved blades of bone sprout from its shoulders and head, while its spine extends up and sprouts a flap of skin like a war-banner. This gives the demon a +2 bonus to its natural Armour Class. Furthermore, all combatants allied with the demon who are five or more levels lower than the demon gain a +1 morale bonus to all attack rolls.

II – Cry Havoc (Psychic): The demon can now channel its rage and hate into its troops. By spending one iliaster per ten troops, the demon may give each warrior fighting in a unit a morale bonus to attack rolls equal to the demon's Charisma bonus. This bonus lasts for one minute. The demon must be able to see and command the troops. This mutation only works on troops fighting as a concerted unit, and the demon cannot target itself.

This link carries a drawback; the demon becomes attuned to fighting with troops at its side. If the demon is ever fighting without another allied creature within sight, it suffers a -2 morale penalty to its attack rolls.

III – Roaring Command Voice: By spending one iliaster, the demon may make its voice emanate from anywhere it can see for one round. Activating this mutation is a free action. The demon's voice becomes brassy and strident, giving it a +2 bonus to Intimidation checks.

IV – Ichor Flow (Physical): When the demon is

leading a unit of troops, it may spend one iliaster per soldier. Tubes grow from the demon and connect to the targeted soldiers. This mutation does not work on unwilling targets. For one hour per level of the demon, the creatures connected by tubes are effectively one creature for the purposes of determining hit points; add their total hit points together. Connected creatures cannot move more than 30 feet away from each other without leaving the unit. When a creature leaves, it takes a proportional amount of damage to the damage inflicted on the whole (for example, if a unit of fifty troops takes 100 points of damage, then a creature who leaves the unit takes two points of damage when it leaves).

The demon can choose to force a creature out of the network at will. With a move action, it may also move hit points equal to its Constitution score from a creature to the network; this has no immediate effect, but ensures that a creature will not take its hit points with it when it leaves the network. These ‘borrowed’ hit points are lost when the network ends.

Secrets of House Sturrach

The Bloody House has never been one for secrets; they wear their hearts on their sleeves while they tear yours from your chest. Still, the House has been wounded by hidden weapons – most notably the Zethu biomechanoids and sorcery – too many times not to have its own secrets.

The Angel Arikiba

Deep beneath Sturrach’s Hold, in a vault built by the Bloody Lord’s own claws, there lies the living form of the angel Arikiba, greatest of Lucifer’s generals. The warlord is nailed to the wall with great spikes, and still bears all the wounds inflicted on him in the Battle of Pandemonium. Sturrach carried his master off the battlefield and brought him here. For hundreds of years, Arikiba has been forced to advise House Sturrach on matters tactical and strategic. The angel’s suffering has driven him mad; he raves that Sturrach is still the perfect soldier, still loyal to the cause, and that the demon took the angel off the field because it was the only way to save Arikiba from being rendered down.

Arikiba’s vault is accessible only to the Head of the House. In latter years, the angel has had periods of lucidity when it demands iliaster to heal itself. Blackwing has yet to consult with the angel, as the demon believes its own martial skills exceed those of some broken and senile wretch who has spent five hundred years nailed to a dungeon wall.

The Mercenary Brigades

To support its demons, House Sturrach has encouraged many of its warriors to join mercenary groups. These mercenaries still have their loyalty to House Sturrach. Thanks to their House Chains and training, these demons usually rise swiftly through the ranks and come to lead their units of hired swords. Up to a fifth of the mercenaries of Hell follow ex-Sturrach warlords.

When the war comes, the Lords of the Bloody Army believe they could destroy any House relying on hired troops – that includes their allies the Carthenay, the Riethii, the Astyanath and possibly the Oblurott if they try to hold their prizes on the Fourth. However, the Breaking of Oaths and the Free Cities has shaken this confidence. The House intends to send spies out to its mercenary captains, to ascertain their true loyalties.

Zarov’s Assassins

House Zethu needs killing. Twice now, the Unveilers have inflicted grievous wounds on House Sturrach – once when they killed Sturrach itself, and again when their biomechanicals drove the Bloody Army back. The Unveilers have become too powerful too quickly. Duke Zarov has been ordered to identify all the key Zethu sorcerers, researchers and Lords, and to put assassins in place to remove their key demons when the word is given.

House Zethu

What we make here is the future, and it shall bring down Heaven and consume Hell. We have made light from darkness; we have shaped the clay and breathed life into it. We shall be as Gods when the great work is done.

History

The House of the Unveilers is the smallest of the nine Great Houses. Even today, when even the Lictat have been able to greatly increase their numbers through the use of spawning pits, there are still very few Zethu.

That is because few have the will and determination needed to challenge the divine on His own terms.

When the first demons were spawned, Zethu was sired by Azazel. The angel was one of the most cunning and clever of the Fallen, his mind was almost as keen as that of Lucifer himself. Azazel passed this intellect onto his spawn-child; the beast that crawled from the same husk as Astyanath was by far the most

intelligent of the new demons. Soon, Zethu was taken out of the army of Hell and assigned to aid Azazel in his work. Finding new sources of iliaster to feed the growing numbers of demons was a priority; the shards of Heaven were dwindling rapidly and there were too few criminal angels to sustain the demons.

During Lucifer's absence, Azazel served as regent of Hell, and Zethu rose with him. The beast's sardonic mien and mocking smile made it deeply unpopular among the angels. While even the most bitter of the First Fallen could see the virtue of demonic warriors like Sturrach, the beasts like Zethu and Astyanath seemed utterly corrupt and cruel without any use whatsoever. This dislike turned to hatred when Azazel set Zethu to look over the inquisitions and judge which angels were disloyal and should be culled to feed the demons.

The discovery of a mortal woman in Hell gave rise to one of the strangest incidents in the early history of Hell. The woman was brought to Lucifer's palace and kept from the sight of the demons. Zethu became obsessed with the potential of the mortal and defied the angelic commands to stay out of the city. The beast crept into Pandemonium and was discovered in the palace of Lucifer by the King of Hell himself. A normal demon would have been utterly destroyed for this insolence; instead, Zethu and Lucifer spoke for a full rise and fall of the Morningstar on matters esoteric and arcane. Lucifer laid the first binding on Zethu, preventing the demon from returning to the city, but the beast was not punished further.

When Lucifer returned with the first souls, Zethu worked with its sibling Astyanath to extract power from these wretched things. Before the first torturing of the damned, iliaster had been so scarce that there was none available for experimentation or even the use of many of the demon's more potent mutations. Now, there was a veritable flood of it. While the demons feasted, Zethu experimented and created the principles of alchemy that would produce hellbroths in later centuries.

During the rebellion, Zethu insured that its master Azazel would be present at Pandemonium; thanks to Lucifer's sorcerous ban, Zethu itself could not enter the city, so it had to ask its master to fetch various items. It is not Zethu's fault that Azazel was not captured by the fiends and managed to flee to the Broken Cosmos.

As one of the oldest and most powerful demons, Zethu sat in the conclave that agreed not to invade Pandemonium; as Lucifer's ban still held it, the demon

was obviously opposed to letting any other Lord claim the city. Instead of forming an army or conquering a domain, however, Zethu left the civilised Lower Hell and headed up.

It was searching for mortals.

During these wilderness years, Zethu captured dozens of mortals and locked them in labyrinths and trap-filled dungeons, studying how their spirits were broken or endured, and how their ability to alter fate in Hell interacted with base matter and demon mutations. It unravelled the skein of its own being and learned the nature of sorcery from the bans and bindings placed on it by Lucifer.

While the other Lords gained a following of demons, Zethu gathered mortals and souls. One lead to the other; the demon gave mortals the knowledge of sorcery in exchange for a Covenant on their souls, so when the mortal died, its soul was instantly dragged down to Hell and Zethu's clutches. It was not until 302 AF that Zethu even bothered to communicate with another demon after leaving the settled regions, and even then it only took demon followers so it could learn of current events in Hell.

The Unveiling, as it came to be called, took place over a single night. A dozen Dukes and other nobles were summoned away by sorcery and destroyed or bound to Zethu. The beast's noble servants or mortal apprentices took over the running of the stolen domains. The Unveiling is still the single swiftest conquest of territory in the annals of Hell. Following this grand gesture, Zethu turned its attention to building its influence. It brought more sorcerers to Hell, declared itself Lord of a great House, entered into the games of politics and status and generally made itself a part of Hell.

Still, House Zethu was one of the smallest of the Houses, and lacked the armies and support needed to defend itself. It also lacked the wealth to pay for mercenaries and the souls to produce wealth. Once again, the Zethu turned their ingenuity to the task and became the pre-eminent crafters of Hell. The industrial revolution of the Infernum began in Zethu's weakness.

When the Brokenlanders attacked, the Houses immediately turned to Zethu. Smiling as it always did, the beast claimed to be able to protect Hell, but the cost in iliaster to fuel the sorcery was astonishingly high. To pay it, at least two-thirds of the demons living in the Pit would have to be starved of iliaster. Nothing would induce Zethu to lower this cost, so the Bileflot Conclave ended in disaster.

The war passed the Zethu by for a while. The demon Lord was engrossed in its attempts to create life and build its industrial base, so the Zethu made minimal efforts to defend their territory; they set up wardings at key passes into their territory on the Sixth, but did not attempt to spawn more warriors. This reliance on sorcery proved to be the House's downfall; the other Houses had learned to deal with sorcery, through mortal agents and countermagic. The crippling blow, however, was cutting off the Zethu supply routes from the Fourth Circle. Their sorcery countered, their industry ground to a halt, the conquest of the Zethu domains was almost a formality.

Zethu responded to this conquest just as Lucifer had responded to Zethu's insolence, so many years before. Sturrach was summoned and bound in the topmost tower of the Citadel Zethu. The Lords of the Zethu knelt before the wisdom and power of their master.

Then the tower exploded, and Zethu was gone.

None of the other Houses were quite so dependant upon their Lord. While the nine great demon founders were of great power, all the rest had built their power base through forging alliances and Covenants with lesser demons. Zethu had ruled by might and intellect alone; not even the most ambitious Grand Duke of the Unveilers had ever even considered replacing the beast. Now it was gone.

The House collapsed into a devastating civil war that destroyed much of what the Sturrach had not taken. While the records of the rest of the Pit show that the stalker Carruth rose to rule, the truth is that the Zethu went through a dozen Lords before one had the strength to hold the throne for longer than a day. Many of the mortal sorcerers carefully trained and Covenanted by the Zethu fled to more secure Houses.

The creation of the so-called army from nowhere and the defeat of the Sturrach was almost an accident. Zethu had experimented with creating life, and had left its experiments in the care of the Lord of Redhive. By chance, that alchemist-noble discovered the combination of elements needed to create biomechanical life. An army swarmed out of the groves and vats of Redhive and struck the retreating and demoralised Bloody army. It was a brutal blow, one that ended Sturrach military domination for decades to come.

The Age of Chaos and the reconstruction was a renaissance for House Zethu. The new

biomechanicals could also be used in construction, and the great factories and foundries of the Sixth were rebuilt bigger and darker than ever. With gathering speed, the machines spread across the Circle, consuming all the coal and iron the Circle of Toil could provide. The other Houses supported this industrial revolution; Astyanath with their knowledge of Cataphactoi techniques, Carthenay with their wealth, Oblurott with their slaves, Riethii with their traders and craftworkers.

The creation of torture palaces gave House Zethu even more influence. The other Houses now looked to it for guidance and innovation. Sorcery became even more accepted. The biomechanical army was re-equipped with new weaponry, making them considerably more formidable. Tanks and hellcycles crawled onto the Zethu battlefields. There were missteps – the botched attempt to control hellgouts, for example – but House Zethu continued to improve.

Its Lord, Carruth, was replaced. The stalker had won the throne in a time of war, but it could not cope with the House during peacetime. The artificers rose in influence and Grand Duke Lir had Carruth destroyed.



Under Lir's rule, House Zethu ran like a well-oiled machine, fuelled by the unyielding strength of the biomechanoid, slave-mined coal from the Toil Circle and – most of all – the torment of the damned. Their screams were like a hymn of praise for the wonder and nobility of House Zethu.

The revolt of the Free Cities hit House Zethu worst of all. Dis had been the centre of Hellish industry from the earliest days, while cities like Mayhem and Char were important places of commerce and sorcery. All the important estates of House Zethu were clustered around these cities; the demons were suddenly faced with dangerous revolutionaries at their very doorsteps. They fled to the other strongholds of House Zethu, to the grim city of Moloch and the Fourth Circle.

Current Standing

House Zethu is something like a man mugged in an open meadow beneath a clear noonday sky; the Unveilers are collectively confused, infuriated and terrified. Up until the Free City revolt, some twelve years ago, the House was the strongest in the Pit. Its army of drone biomechanicals was a significant force; together with the House's vast fleet of war machines, vehicles, artillery and combat sorcerers, the Unveiler Army could have challenged any force in Hell with a fair chance of success.

Economically, the Zethu had some of the best torture palaces and controlled the majority of the heavy industry of the Infernum. While it could not match Carthenay's financial sway, it ran a close second. Politically, too, the Zethu wielded considerable power for their limited numbers. The greatest strength of House Zethu, of course, was its mastery of learning. Every House had to consult with the libraries and sages of the Unveilers; the scholarship of the Zethu won the respect even of the Haimon and the Glabretch.

Now the House is in chaos. The withdrawal from the Sixth Circle was a panicked rout. Nobles fled their fortresses and mansions, leaving their wealth and finery. Sorcerers took only their choicest tomes and left their towers before the mob could burn them. The laboratories and engineering works were left to the rust rain and omvourers. Of course, the tales of the violence and brutality of the mob were somewhat exaggerated – actually, the brutality and violence were perfectly accurate, what was exaggerated was the number of Oathbreakers swarming out of Dis and Mayhem to loot the estates and throw nobles into common spawning pits.

The nobility and intelligentsia of House Zethu

abandoned their estates and by the time they realised that the Free City heresy was confined to the Free Cities, it was too late. The rich industrial heartland and estates of the Zethu were occupied by independent, Houseless renegades, ambitious minor Houses and so on. The House has tried to re-establish itself in the Fourth Circle and the fringes of the Sixth, but this is proving virtually impossible. The Zethu must somehow retake all they have lost.

Culture and Customs

Before the upheaval, the Zethu were *nouveau riche*; the rise of industry gave the House wealth and power, catapulting it into the same social leagues as the Astyanath and Riethii. While scholars were still respected in the House, the Zethu nobility were rapidly becoming as merrily degenerate as the worst of the Garden-dwellers.

This faction of the nobility is still trying to cling to its power, but theirs is a power dependant on mills and factories that have been lost to the rabble. Nobles and courtiers are crowded into the streets of Moloch, each trying to prove that they are just as influential and worthy as they were when a million souls screamed in their name.

The old nobility of the Zethu have retaken their place in the House; scholars and sorcerers, engineers and torturers who seek blasphemous knowledge. If the Oblurott's sin is gluttony, the Riethii are lust, the Astyanath vanity and the Sturrach wrath, then most certainly the deadly sin of the Zethu is the Sin Against The Holy Ghost, the sin of trying to claim God's place and power. With mocking smiles and cunning thoughts, the Zethu make unholy things in defiance of all sanity and morality.

Holdings

Mentioning this topic is something of a faux pas in Zethu circles at the moment.

The Zethu have lost or abandoned nearly two-thirds of their Sixth Circle holdings. Everything within four hundred miles of Dis has been left to the rabble; holdings have been retained near the other Free Cities, but have been heavily fortified. The remaining Zethu estates on the Sixth surround the industrial works on the Phlegthon and around the Duchy of Redhive.

The Zethu always had far fewer domains than the other Houses, but most of these have been abandoned. Of the thirteen Zethu Grand Duchies, only two – the Grand Duchy of the Burning River and the Grand Duchy of Chokfen – remain in the House's hands.

About half the Zethu industrial base is still in the House's possession, as are most of its biomechanical harvesting grounds. The various institutions of the Zethu, like its torture palaces, libraries, House fortresses and so on are surrounded by the rabble, but are garrisoned by troops and biomechanicals and so have not fallen into enemy hands.

The House's Fourth Circle holdings were limited to mines and a few fortresses and testing grounds. Now they have been hastily converted into fortresses and palaces as hundreds of Barons and Viscounts crowd into them. The Citadel Zethu on the Eighth Circle has also become a popular refuge for the House, and the living machine of the Tutelary Intellect is hard pressed to find places for them all.

Notable Members

The Zethu have a tradition of iconoclasm – which amounts to mad scientist-sorcerers perched in towers, trying to tear souls from their bodies or bring life to a sewn-together corpse – so those who rise high in the ranks of the Zethu tend to be unique and eerie figures.

Lir

The Lord of House Zethu is an artificer, although he hardly conforms to the stereotype of the brass-bound dwarf. Lir is a hulking red-bearded figure, known for the great number of weapons and tools it keeps on a belt of human flesh around its corpulent waist. Lir has little talent for sorcery, preferring to rely on his human servants for problems of magic. Since the loss of the Zethu estates, Lir has retreated to the Citadel Zethu.

Currently, Lir's priority is retaking the lost estates of the Zethu. He has been courting both the Carthenay and the Astyanath for aid, hoping to engage one House or the other in an alliance. His other option would win him the hatred of the rest of the Pit, but it would give him Dis without risking another demon House taking the city – Lir knows enough about the defences of the city that he could tell the Knights of the Harrowing how to sack the city. The Knights would slaughter the resident demons and free the souls, but they would be unable to hold Dis....

Duke Susan Tremayne

One of the highest-ranking mortals in the Pit, Tremayne is a sorceress of some power. Her Duchy was one of those abandoned when the Zethu fled the Sixth Circle, but rather than leave her home, Tremayne remained behind. She has enough personal power to

defend herself, and now serves as an unofficial liaison between the heretics and the Unveilers.

Noble Mutations

House Zethu has three noble mutation chains.

Chain of High Sorcery

This most ancient Chain was developed by Zethu himself, and is the surest sign of nobility among the Zethu.

I – Master of Sorcery: The demon learns three new rituals of its choice. This link may be taken multiple times.

II – Hearth Spell: The demon gains a +4 bonus to all Sorcery checks made within its domain.

This link carries a drawback; the demon's connection to its domain is such that it suffers a –4 penalty to Sorcery checks made outside its domain.

III – Mass Iliaster Drain: The demon can now draw iliaster from the populace. When the demon uses the Energy Tap ritual, it can drain iliaster from any creature in its domain or from any site.

Chain of the Machine King

The Machine King Chain is the foundation of the Zethu's new-found wealth and industry; it allows the Lord of a domain to wring even more work out of his machines.

I – Mills Turn Night And Day (Psychically): The demon may now fuel the industrial machinery of a domain using its own will. By spending one iliaster, it can telekinetically control one static mechanical device anywhere in its domain. The machine runs for eight hours using the demon's skills. The machine works blindly; the demon cannot see through the machine or sense anything about it, it can only act according to its design, but uses the demon's Craft/Torture skill. Alternatively, the demon can fuel a machine; a Medium or smaller machine costs the demon five iliaster to fuel for one day; multiple larger machine costs by the Size multiplier for weapon cost (see Equipment in *Book of the Damned*).

II – Mechanical Efficiency: The productivity of one industrial installation in the demon's domain is increased by 20%. This link may be taken multiple times; each link increases the productivity of a different installation.

III – Chains of the Worker: Great metal chains sprout from the machinery of an industrial site within the demon's domain. These chains hook into the flesh of the workers, while sinuous tubes and wires penetrate their stomachs, chests and mouths. The workers now cannot leave the institution, and are sustained by its furnaces, no longer requiring food, sleep or iliaster. The fuel cost for the installation doubles. This link may be taken multiple times; each link turns a different installation into a living hell.

Chain of Unholy Life

The Unholy Life chain is rarely seen outside the Duchy of Redhive and the lands bordering it, as it relates to the Zethu biomechanicals.

I – Heal Biomechanical (Physical): By spending one iliaster and touching a biomechanical creature, the demon can heal that creature of 1d6 damage. Any amount of iliaster can be spent as a swift action when using this mutation.

The demon's body becomes more biomechanical when this link is taken; intestinal tubes hang from its back and arms, black plates of armour grow across its body, lenses close over its eyes and so on. This has no game mechanical effect, but does mark the character as having this link.

II.I – Possess Biomechanical (Psychic): By spending three iliaster, the demon can possess any biomechanical within the borders of its domain. The demon must be able to see or uniquely identify the biomechanical creature. The possession lasts for as long as the demon wishes and the biomechanical stays within the bounds of the demon's domain.

II.II – Biomechanical Form (Shapeshift): The demon gains the ability to shapeshift into a biomechanical. This works just like the Alternate Form link of the Chain of Form (but the demon gains the Biomechanical type and traits while in the Alternate Form).

III – Command Biomechanicals (Psychic): The demon gains a psychic link with biomechanical creatures within its domain. It gains a +4 insight bonus to any Diplomacy, Sense Motive or Warcraft checks made involving biomechanicals.

Secrets of House Zethu

The House of Unveilers are defined by their secrets; the House's victories have always come from behind the veil. Now, however, many of their secrets have been abandoned to the mob.

Piercing the Veil

Currently, it is only House Carthenay that maintains long-term cults in the mortal world. The problem for demons is that iliaster is exceedingly hard to produce outside Hell; there are, after all, no souls to torture and abuse there. House Zethu, however, believes that it has a solution. A fortress equipped with a Soul Cage can transmit iliaster to a demon even over great distances; it should be possible to pierce dimensional barriers and support a demon in the mortal world. Two fortresses – the municipal fortress at Char and the Ferrul Spike – were both equipped with Soul Cages connected to the brass pillars of the First Circle. It is believed that the iliaster could be sent through a First Circle portal to the mortal world.

All this was wonderfully theoretically until Char fell to the Free City heretics. House Zethu had not activated the new cages, as their sorcerers suspected the devices could cause another Great Gout if mishandled. House Zethu has sent agents to Char to disable the cage, but the fortress has so far defied infiltration.

Cleansing the Hearth

The fortress of Redhive is the centre of biomechanical research; it has also become the heart of the Zethu's effort to drive the Free City traitors from their land. As a biomechanoid's loyalty is built into its artificial mind, and does not derive from Covenants that could be broken by the heresy, the Lords of the Zethu are confident they will be able to slaughter the enemy without problems. The main barrier to this plan is the presence of the Sturrach armies besieging Dis; the Bloody Army remembers its defeat at the hands of the biomechanicals of old, and now they know what to look for. The Lord of Redhive must grow its living army carefully and in hiding.

The House has considered growing a new harvesting centre outside the Sixth, but the effort will be tremendously costly and dangerous; starting a centre from scratch means that the House would have to expose secrets of the biomechanicals never before glimpsed by their rivals.

The Secrets of Sorcery

House Zethu have been the undisputed masters of magic every since Zethu itself created the art centuries ago. The House was the first to bring Faustians into Hell and compact with mortals, the first to use summoning and warding as a tactic of war. The Zethu have built great ritual sites with chalices of iliaster

and soulbound talismans of great power to enhance their sorcerers' power.

The Zethu have conducted more research into sorcery than any other House, and have developed previously unknown rituals and placed them in sealed grimoires. The loss of their estates means that several of these books have fallen into the hands of independent faustians, hedge-wizards and even scavengers with no idea of what they have stolen. Fortunately for House Zethu, the grimoires are written in a secret cipher that remains unbroken.

Opinion varies within the House on how best to recover these tomes. Some believe the cipher will hold until the end of time and that the loss of the tomes is meaningless. Others wish to employ thieves to hunt down and steal the books back, but this risks revealing the true value of the books.

The Tutelary Intellect

The machine mind of the Tutelary Intellect is one of the great resources of House Zethu, but of late, some of its tenders are finding it... quirky. It has the authority to send demons on missions for the House, and several of these missions have had very strange aims. One group was sent to retrieve the firing keys for the artillery aimed at Cacaphractus and bring them back to the Citadel Zethu; another had the task to capture six specific mortals from the Branded tribes and float their bodies down the Phlegthon. If the Intellect is losing its clockwork mind, it would be another grievous blow to the fortunes of House Zethu.

Independent Demons & the Lesser Houses

A thousand Lesser Houses, ten thousand villages, townships and companies, a hundred thousand milleries – and not enough free souls for half that number. The lesser Houses shall starve, my Lord, until they kneel to the banners of the Great Princes of the Pit.

Despite all the carnage and pain of the hundreds of long years since the War of Pandemonium, the desires of the common demon remains unchanged. While the great Houses battle for supremacy and an empty throne, the common demon seeks little more than a few souls to torture and enslave, a petty little

Crime in the Pit

A great number of the independent demons of the Pit are involved in illegal activities of one sort or another. The Houses control so much that stealing from them is the only way to survive without bowing to them. Most crimes are the simple theft of iliaster; the torture palaces and slave pens are closely guarded, but looting a treasury can sustain a demon for months. Blackmail is another profitable field, as most nobles have a few embarrassing secrets.

The Seventh Circle and Port Despair are home to the organised crime of the Pit, which is run through an unofficial Lesser House called House Hand.

kingdom to rule and the simple joys that come from inflicting agony and injury on others. As more and more damned are corralled by the Houses and run through the torture palaces, this simple life is more and more difficult to achieve.

The Houses are bringing more and more demons under their control, either through bonds of loyalty, control of the iliaster supply or through the direct method of throwing independents into the spawning pits to produce new House demons. To purchase iliaster, common demons without souls have to engage in base work like crafting items or construction work – for most of the history of the Infernum, it was the damned who toiled and the demons who were the slavers and taskmasters, so it is considered beneath a true hellkin to work in such a fashion. Still, needs must when the noble devils drive.

Some independents have become entertainers or mercenaries, surviving on the patronage of the Great Houses. The constant whirl of parties and debaucheries on the Seventh calls for whole hosts of servants, musicians, acrobats, jesters, gigolos and whores. Many of these also double as spies, thieves and assassins – when a demon will kill another for half a day's ration of iliaster, it is easy to employ some commoner as an agent or send them on a suicide mission.

The cities have traditionally been the bastions of the

independent demon; these were neutral territories, held by no House, so independent and House demons met equally on the streets and traded as equals. Places like Minos and Moloch were strongholds where the common demon could look its noble peer in an appropriate eye without quaking. Now, of course, the Free Cities have upset the whole cart of souls and every city is suddenly a potential bed of treachery and Oathbreaking.

It is now only in the Upper Circles, beyond the iron road, where the common demons live as they once did. Up there, the torture palaces are few and far between; the mills of Hell still grind away there, and the souls scream like they did in the beginning.

Mercenaries

Who would pay for death in the Pit of Hell? There is slaughter enough in the streets of every village in the Pit to sate the bloodlust of the worst tyrants the mortal world ever birthed.

History

Sellclaws have been a part of Infernal warfare since the very beginning. There is always killing to be done somewhere in Hell, and it generally pays better than licking some petty baron's boots or wringing the soul of a dead washerwoman out over and over again. The demons were bred for war, and war is what they do best.

Sturrach himself fought for Jelac and Carthenay before founding a House. Many nobles who sit high in Hell once commanded rag-tag armies in the field. Over the centuries of combat, rules of engagement and brotherhood have evolved between the mercenary bands, a common agreement on killing and slaughter that preserves the mercenaries and puts the burden of death on the House troops.

The great wars preceding the Age of Chaos were a glorious era for mercenaries. The city of Golgotha on the Fifth Circle became the centre of the mercenary trade in the Infernum. With the end of the war, many mercenaries found themselves out of work as the Houses' abilities to pay for and wage war collapsed. The mercenaries responded by conquering the so-called Sellsword March, a circle of petty domains around Golgotha. The soul fields and factories of the March sustain the mercenaries in times of wanton peace, although the city is traditionally short of iliaster.

One notable development in the mercenary trade

came in 454 AF, when a gang of human warriors arrived at the gates of Golgotha and demanded entry. These warriors of the Bori claimed to want work as mercenaries. Initially, the demons laughed at the upstarts, but the Bori proved more than a match for the toughest warrior demon. The Bori were accepted into the mercenary brotherhood, and ever since then war-parties of the Bori heading down on one of the Hellish highways are considered to be en route to Golgotha and hence cannot be attacked without drawing the wrath of the mercenaries. Unfortunately for the Bori, there are no highways on the First Circle, and this protection does not apply to Bori heading back up the Pit to their homelands.

Current Standing

It is once again a boom time for mercenaries – House Oblurott is hiring to protect its homelands, while both the Zethu and the Free Cities are frantically reinforcing their own armies with mercenary troops. The Free City heresy offers a unique opportunity to the mercenaries, as Covenants are a perpetual thorn in their side. They want to fight for coin, not because some especially seductive or commanding demon drew them into a supernatural debt. Making Golgotha into a Free City would break these bonds, but could also draw the mercenaries into a war with their erstwhile employers.

Culture and Customs

Mercenaries who operate out of Golgotha have their own code, which they expect those who use the services of the Killer's Market to obey. Less disciplined sellclaws (and such demons exist, despite the violence and lawlessness of Golgotha) obey no rules save the whip and the Covenant.

The code has the following requirements:

- ⊗ No mercenary is to accept a Covenant of Strength 10 or higher from an employer
- ⊗ However, every mercenary in a band is to Covenant with at least two of its fellows to at least Strength 10.
- ⊗ The minimum fee for a mercenary is a crown a day.
- ⊗ In battle, the mercenary commander has ultimate authority over its hellkin, and must not see their lives squandered.
- ⊗ When mercenary bands engage each other, their commanders should strive to win the battle with the fewest casualties possible, obeying the flags of truce and surrender and giving time to take bodies and weapons off the field of battle.
- ⊗ Should a mercenary demon be defeated, it shall be thrown into the spawning pit of Fellmar, not into a



House pit.

- ⊗ A claw sheathed is a mouth that goes unfed; those who do not contribute to the victory do not share in the spoils

Holdings

Most mercenary Lords with holdings got them by selling out to the rule of the Houses. The exceptions are the Barons of the Sellsword March.

Notable Bands

The **Bori** are perhaps the best known of the mercenaries. These human barbarians are incredibly skilled combatants that have fought on every battlefield in the Pit. They do only one thing – kill demons – but they do it very well indeed. The tactics and weaponry of the Bori have hardly changed at all since they first arrived at Golgotha, although they do have a few salvaged vehicles and modern weapons.

The largest bands are bitter rivals – the fiends of the **Brigade of Burning Shadows** have a longstanding

hatred of their mechanised rivals, the force called the **Grindstone**. Both of these mercenary bands number in the thousands and have been established for centuries.

Another infamous band, the **Hellhounds**, were destroyed when Mayhem bombarded the Zethu defenders around it. The red-and-black dog's head banner of the Hellhounds may reappear on the Infernum in the claws of some other band, but the formerly fearsome warriors of the band are now ash blowing on the hot winds.

Most smaller bands are named after their commanders. Throat of **Throath's Cutters**, for example, controls the fortress of Fiendholt on the Second Circle. It is rumoured to be offering the fortress to the Brigade of Burning Shadows in exchange for a captaincy within their ranks. Another currently infamous band, **Grash's Guardians**, was the first mercenary band to willingly and openly sign on with a Free City. The Guardians currently harass Sturrach forces besieging Dis, raising the siege long enough for the city to bring fresh supplies in.

The Lesser Houses

Lesser is a matter of perspective. Is my House less powerful than that of Sturrach or Riethii? Yes. But they are dead and I still live. Is my House less powerful than that of Zethu or Oblurott? Yes. But you are my prisoner, not theirs, so for you I am the greatest and most powerful thing in all the worlds, and you will worship me as the only true God.

There are only nine Great Houses, but the symbols of over twelve hundred Lesser Houses are recorded in the books of the Haimon. All it takes to claim Lesser House status is a barony, a fortress and an heir, but few demon Lords manage it. It is the last requirement – the heir – that stops most of them. Half-demons and crossbreeds are the normal form of heir, as choosing another demon to take one's throne is an expression of trust and faith few can manage.

In rare cases, a Lesser House can produce its own noble mutation chain. The nature of demonic mutation is still a mystery to most, but certainly new abilities can be created by establishing a tie to a domain.

Most Lesser Houses are destroyed before the heir ever takes over; the claim of House status merely gives the demon Lord greater standing in Pandemonium. A

Lord of a Lesser House can speak in the Council of Estates over the voices of mere fortress-holders.

Those that survive for longer than a generation or two tend to be satellites of Greater Houses, where they provide some useful service to the larger House. The Charonites are one of the best known of these lesser Houses, but every Great House has at least three or four satellites.

Priests of the

Great House	Lesser Houses	Known For
Astyanath	Distrae	Surrendering to the Sturrach without fighting a battle
Astyanath	Alsheen	Entertainers and courtiers
Astyanath	Mael	Sadistic warriors and torturers
Carthenay	Obgur	Greed far beyond even the common Carthenay avarice
Carthenay	Crestin	Traders and explorers
Carthenay	Pluto	Bankers; especially in the trade of souls.
Glabretch	Fa'utch	Drinking and poisons
Glabretch	Horeth	Fleshwarping entertainers
Glabretch	Delsiqui	Being tunnel dwellers
Haimon	Charonites	Sailing the Styx and carrying souls and news back to Upper Hell
Haimon	Shade	Being composed entirely of the dead
Haimon	Ceremos	Funeral arrangements and morticians
Oblurott	Jorgeth	Master breeders of war-spawn
Oblurott	Resh	Physical strength and combat
Oblurott	Mormo	Sorcerous rites and bargains with strange entities
Riethii	Lacyr	False emotion and manipulation
Riethii	Katrin	Politics and lies
Riethii	Naji	Assassins and spies
Riethii	Shizui	Sorcery and shapechanging
Sturrach	Rudgut	Mercenaries
Sturrach	Ferul	Death commandos
Sturrach	Skar	Weapon manufacture
Zethu	Mephistopheles	Bargaining with mortals
Zethu	Issengrim	Being notoriously insane and locked in their own fortress
Zethu	Malthus	Composed of mortal sorcerers; broke off from the Malthian League

Morningstar

Defy us, and all shall be dark.

History

The Priests of the Morningstar are a religion in name only – or so they claim. They tend the arcane machinery of Pandemonium that produces the Morningstar and illuminates the Pit. The order was founded by the demons who were sent to investigate the city following the demonic revolt. The annals of the Houses record that only one of those demons, the succubus Soline, returned to the Conclave and warned the nascent Houses that any attempts to dislodge her and her fellows from Pandemonium would result in the Pit being plunged into eternal darkness.

For a full century, there was no word from the city of Pandemonium. The Morningstar rose and fell each day, growing slightly dimmer each time. Then the Priests of the Morningstar issued forth in processions from the gates of the city and travelled to the other Circles to demand a tithe of iliaster to keep the sun alight.

Today, the Priests have churches all over Hell. There, the Priests collect iliaster for the Morningstar and the running of Pandemonium. They are a neutral party in the wars of the Houses, interceding in disputes, overseeing surrenders and observing Covenants. They serve as messengers and spies for hire, as well as a refuge for renegade demons being pursued by House stalkers.

All this is known and recorded in the annals of the Houses.

The motivations behind the Priests of the Morningstar have been hidden from the Houses since the Church's founding. Some know more than others – Riethii told her spawn-sister Soline all she knew of the palace of the archangels, while the hidden angel Haimon informed the emissaries of all they needed to know to operate and preserve the Morningstar's machinery. Armed with this knowledge, Soline and her followers were able to penetrate the defences of Pandemonium. In the heart of the city, in the former Palace of Lucifer, they found a great golden machine that ran with iliaster and holy fire. This great device had been constructed before the spawning of the demons by the First of the

Fallen himself in consultation with Azazel; each day, it produced the great Morningstar to illuminate the Pit.

As the emissaries explored the machine, they discovered a female human skull embedded in the machinery. The skull spoke to them, saying that it had been left as a messenger by Lucifer. The Archangel had left the Pit, but would one day return to claim his kingdom once again. If the emissaries served by maintaining Lucifer's works and observing the efforts of the demons, then they would be rewarded when the First of the Fallen returned.

Surrounded by the great works and high sorcery of the First of the Fallen, the emissaries agreed. Soline became the Hierophant of the Church of the Morningstar and her fellow spies became Cardinals, Bishops and Priests. There was sufficient iliaster in the city to sustain them for many years, so they chose to remain with Pandemonium for a time, observing the wars of the demons and preparing for their emergence onto the stage of Hell. They had enough to busy themselves in the city of angels, anyway – although the Hall of the Archangels and Lucifer's Palace showed signs of being carefully and

deliberately abandoned, with certain treasures and records removed, the rest of the city was in chaos. All the treasures of the Thrones lay scattered around like chaff on the streets. While the Dominions and their demon slaves had been toiling to build up Hell, the Thrones were preparing for the war on Heaven. Angel-forged weapons and sorceries of great power lay unused in the vaults of Pandemonium, while degenerate and avaricious Fallen had brought great amounts of gemstones and gold down to the city.

The Priests left the city when the sun began to grow dim and their stocks of iliaster were depleted. The scholars of the Houses had already detected the decline of the Morningstar, so the demands of the Priests were listened to by the Lords of the Houses. Furthermore, the Priests were now elder demons of considerable power, augmented with the weapons and garb of angels. The Priests had managed to fend off the Houses when they had nothing; now, they were at the full height of their power and were easily able to convince the Houses to support them. Temples were built throughout Hell, where iliaster was collected to fuel the Morningstar. Some of this iliaster came from the Houses' own coffers, but soon individual demons were giving tithes to the Church out of fear of the sun going dark or for political influence. As the Infernum became more and more divided between into factions, having a neutral order with influence equal to that of the Houses proved to be a valuable balancing tool. The Priests were the seed around which the political structures of the Infernum accreted.

As the skull asked, the Priests have continued to observe and record all the dealings and wars of the Houses. The skull has not spoken since that initial command, but its servants have prospered beyond any of the Houses.

Current Standing

The Church's influence is built upon sleight-of-hand; neither the common demons nor the Priests have anything like faith or humility, so the normal foundations of a religion do not apply. The Church is more like a corporation or a criminal organisation. Its influence is subtle but wide-ranging; it has outposts in every Circle and city, and collects a tithe from every House except House Glabretch. The Priests' political sway allows them to manipulate the Houses to a degree; they can start wars and break alliances, but must be careful not to push the balance too far. The Houses respect each other because of their military power, numbers and wealth – the Priests have virtually no troops, few members and a vast amount of their wealth is consumed by the maintenance and



fuelling of the Morningstar.

While the Church only has a few guards to protect its outlying temples, they are very well equipped and highly skilled. Assassination is a favoured method of the Church. They also have an excellent intelligence network, one that is second only to that of their Riethii allies.

Both Haimon and Riethii strongly support the Priests of the Morningstar; those two Houses provide over half the support and two-thirds of the members of the Church.

Culture and Customs

Demons may petition to join the Church at any of its temples; most are turned away. The Priests of the Morningstar do not need a great number of members, so they choose only the best and the most powerful – or the most desperate. Many Priests are renegades from the Houses. Only demons and half-breeds may join the Priests; although they do employ mortal sorcerers and agents, angels are quite forbidden from entering any of the Church's inner sanctums.

The Priests delight in mocking mortal religions; they are quite fascinated by the concept of faith and enjoy torturing the few mortal holy men who end up in Hell. They also collect the souls of corrupt priests and preachers as curiosities. The Priests indulge in bizarrely elaborate ceremonies and pompous rites, many of which exist purely for show.

Privately, the Priests who know about the skull and Lucifer's Promise believe that they are the last true servants of the First of the Fallen, and that when he returns, they shall be the new Thrones and Dominions in the new order. This belief fills them with overweening arrogance.

Holdings

The Church controls half the city of Pandemonium and has temples throughout Hell. Every city has at least one such temple, defended by half-a-dozen initiates or lay brethren. These temples are fortified – some are even genuine fortresses – and contain heavily protected treasuries where the tithes are kept. These temples are neutral territory, although renegade demons who seek refuge here are turned away until they have something useful to offer the priests.

Ranks in the Church of the Morningstar

The Church of the Morningstar is established enough to have its own mutation chain.

House Rank	Church Rank	Church Mutations	Experience Bonus
Demon	—	—	0
Housefellow	Initiate	—	300
Devil	Deacon	—	500
Daemon	Priest	1	1,000
Captain	Elder Priest	2	2,000
Baron	Bishop	3	3,000
Viscount	Archbishop	4	5,000
Earl	Cardinal	5	9,000
Duke	Grand Cardinal	6	12,000
Head of House	Hierophant	7	20,000

The Church even has temples in the Free Cities, which so far have not succumbed to the heresy.

Notable Members

Soline still rules the church, making her the oldest living demon in Hell, the only one of the first spawnings to survive to the present day. She conceals her identity behind the office of the Hierophant, appearing in public only when dressed in ceremonial robes and veils.

The Grand Cardinal of Pandemonium is the public face of the church. Cardinal Rourath attends the Council of Hierarchs as the church's representative and is generally assumed to be propping up a doddering Hierophant as its puppet; the truth is closer to the opposite.

Church Mutations

The two mutation chains unique to the Church are the Chain of the Morningstar and the Chain of the Hierophant. Only the Hierophant of the Church may possess the final link in the second chain.

Chain of the Morningstar

This chain allows the demon to tap into the power of the rising sun of Hell.

I – Sun Priest: The demon may spend three iliaster as a free action to attune itself to the Morningstar. This attunement gives the demon a +3 profane bonus to all saving throws, and gives opponents a –3 penalty to saving throws against the demon's abilities for ten minutes. This mutation only functions during the daylight hours, although a lesser version giving a +1 bonus and –1 penalty can be invoked during false dawn.

This link carries a drawback; the demon must spend one hour a day bathed in the rays of the Morningstar. Most churches include crystal infernariums where the light of the sun is focused onto a sacrificial chamber in the heart of the fortress.

II – Beacon of Unholy Light: The demon may now project beams of burning light from its eyes. Activating this mutation is an attack action. The beam hits automatically, but victims are permitted to make Reflex saves for half damage. A demon may project a number of beams in a round equal to its Charisma bonus. The damage from each beam varies depending on the amount of iliaster allocated to it; each point of iliaster causes the beam to deal 1d8 points of fire damage. For example, a demon could spend ten iliaster in a round to fire two 4d8 beams and one 2d8 beam. Each beam must be aimed at a different target.

Alternatively, the demon can project the beam into the sky as a beacon; this beacon can be seen for one mile per point of iliaster spent on it.

III – Archon of Shadow and Light: This link allows the demon to manipulate the light of the Morningstar. At the cost of ten iliaster per hour, the demon can cause the light of the Morningstar to linger (making the day last longer) or fade (making the night come more quickly). A demon of sufficient power can even make the sun appear to stand still. This mutation affects a region of radius equal to the demon's level in miles.

Chain of the Hierophant

The Hierophantic Chain measures a demon's progress in the church.

I – Office of the Priest (Blasphemous, Physical): This mutation gives the demon the power of transubstantiation – it can convert normal iliaster into crystallised iliaster. Crystallised iliaster dissolves back into normal iliaster 1d6 hours after being ingested by a creature or submerged in liquid. Turning iliaster into crystallised iliaster requires that the demon touch



the vessel and spend one iliaster per five points to be converted. The demon can even make a touch attack to crystallise the iliaster in a victim's reserve. The victim may make a Fortitude save to resist this attack. If iliaster in a victim's reserve is crystallised, he cannot access it for 1d6 hours but will not be forced into Dissolution.

The physical manifestation of this link is that the demon's skin grows crystalline deposits and cysts all over.

II – Office of the Bishop (Blasphemous, Physical): The bishop's office gives the demon the power to preach. It may spend a point of iliaster as a free action to get a +2 bonus to a Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate or Knowledge (theology) roll, but only against other demons. The demon also gains some of the protections of its order; other demons suffer a –2 morale penalty to attacks against the demon.

The physical manifestation of this link is that tattoos of scripture appear all over the demon, giving it the appearance of a living book.

III – Office of the Cardinal (Blasphemous, Physical): This mutation allows the demon to draw

upon the power of the Fallen themselves. The demon may take any of the basic Angelic breed abilities as a mutation.

The physical manifestation of this link depends on the breed mutation chosen; wings or alabaster-white skin are common forms.

IV – Office of the Hierophant (Blasphemous, Physical): Lucifer's vicar in Hell gains a unique ability to draw on the iliaster reserves of the Morningstar itself. The demon has an effectively infinite supply of iliaster; this works just like the mortal ability to generate iliaster. Furthermore, the demon becomes immune to both fire and hellfire.

The physical manifestation of this mutation is a crown of fire that dances on the demon's brow.

Secrets of the Priests of the Morningstar

The Church of the Morningstar's ultimate aims are a secret even to its own members.

The Haimon Connection

House Haimon has been an ally and sponsor of the Church since its founding. Currently, the Haimon control five of the nine Grand Cardinals and over a third of the Priests. Most of the temples in Middle and Upper Hell look to the Deathly House for leadership, not the church. While the Haimon have always had influence, this level of control is unprecedented and stems from the Haimon victories during the great war. Soline is reputed to be concerned and intends to purge her followers, which may result in a disastrous schism.

The Sorcery of Angels

Among the treasures in the Church's possession are the original books of sorcery created by the First Fallen. Most sorcery in the Pit is based on the work of Zethu, who recreated sorcery from the residue of the spells cast upon it. The Church has access to the real thing, not a second-hand copy. The spell that Lucifer cast to create Covenants is here in the archives, deliberately left for them to find. However, these spells can only be cast by angels and the Church has no intention of letting any of the Fallen threaten its power. When the Church must use sorcery, it brings in a captured angel and executes it once it casts the requisite spell.

faustians

Upstart souls cloaked in thin flesh, their temerity in binding the hellkin shall result in their annihilation!

The mortal sorcerers are honorary demons, and so can rule domains and become House nobles just as any other demon can. The faustians have also several organisations outside the House structures. Unlike demons, who have no real bonds of fellowship save those inflicted by Covenants, the mortal faustians at least remember concepts like friendship. Masters teach apprentices, they trade news of particular hard-to-bind demons or rebellious hellkin, they gossip about other sorcerers and mortals. Spells like *voice of the fire* allow sorcerers to communicate with each other over long distances.

Most elder Faustians have a fortress or at least a tower in the wilderness to themselves; a structure is necessary to put up the defensive wardings. Less powerful and influential sorcerers sell their services to a House for protection or dwell in a city where they are protected by the city guards.

Sooner or later, all sorcerers following the Zethu



Returning to the Mortal World

Hellgout Rider

Prerequisites: *None*

Components: Cage of black iron (5 crowns, –20), Blood of a newcomer mortal (Varies, –10)

Cost: 10 iliaster

Casting Time: One hour.

Sorcery DC (Cha): 25

Failure?: See below

Resist: None

Effects: *Hellgout rider* allows the sorcerer to travel with a hellgout. The spell must be cast as the hellgout begins in Hell; spotting the correct time requires a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 15). If the spell is not cast at the right time, it automatically fails. The character appears back in the mortal world at a place connected to the blood it spilt (if it did not use a mortal's blood as a component, the sorcerer's point of entry into the mortal world is random). The character is the centre of a new Shadowing – essentially, the hellgout is split in two, with the sorcerer being the locus of the second branch of the gout. This lesser gout behaves just like a normal hellgout, giving the sorcerer several days or weeks to roam around the mortal world before being drawn back to Hell. When the Twisting happens, only the sorcerer vanishes from the mortal world.

If the spell fails, the caster still travels to the mortal world with the hellgout, but cannot leave the area of the Shadowing no matter what. He emerges in the mortal world in the heart of the Shadowed area, not at the destination tied to the blood.

Shadow's Passage

Prerequisites: None

Components: None.

Cost: 1 iliaster

Casting Time: One standard action

Sorcery DC (Int): 10

Failure?: No effect.

Resist: None

Effects: Normally, a creature in a Shadowed region of the mortal world cannot leave it. This simple ritual lets the sorcerer leave the Shadowing. The spell must be cast at the edge of the area. By increasing the DC by +5 per other creature, the spell can be extended to encompass others.

Walker in the Worlds Between

Prerequisites: *Hellgout Rider*

Components: None

Cost: One iliaster per level of the caster, plus one iliaster per Corruption level of the caster

Casting Time: One standard action

Sorcery DC (Cha): 25

Failure?: No effect

Resist: None

Effects: When this spell is cast, the sorcerer vanishes from Hell and appears in a clap of thunder and sulphur in the mortal world. The spell is extremely costly to cast, as the sorcerer must overcome his soul's natural inclination to remain in Hell. The sorcerer appears at a place of his choosing within the mortal world, and remains in that realm until a portal or hellgout drags him back to Hell – this process is inevitable, but some sorcerers can evade Hell for decades.

traditions are drawn into Hell. The practice of sorcery disrupts the reality of the mortal realm, increasing the likelihood of natural portals and hellgouts. As a sorcerer practises his art, the shadows gather around him, the world warps and coils of darkness grow from the corners of alleyways. Eventually, he will be dragged down into the Netherworld. Some realise their fate in advance and make preparations for their literal downfall; others are taken by surprise when the hellgout erupts around them.

It is possible, though difficult, for a mortal sorcerer to return to the mortal world. Two rituals exist in the common grimoires to accomplish this feat, although adventures in the mortal world are currently outside the scope of the *Infernum* game (see Returning to the Mortal World sidebar).

The Faustian Code

Faustians have their own private code of ethics and honour, which is designed to preserve sorcery and the position of the faustians in Hell. Although they have been recognised as honorary demons for centuries, most demons still privately regard the mortal sorcerers as arrogant enemies who deserve to be brought back down and crushed under the demonic heel, and any misstep on the part of a faustian will see him stripped of his status and, well, crushed under the heel of the nearest demon.

The Faustian Code states:

- ⊗ Any mortal-blooded being who can summon and bind a demon is considered faustian, regardless of origin, nature or beliefs.
- ⊗ A faustian may not attack the books or ritual implements of another faustian
- ⊗ A faustian may not attack another Faustian without first informing him that the two are at war.
- ⊗ A faustian must take at least one apprentice during his lifetime. For the duration of an apprentice's training, he is considered to be under the protection of this code.
- ⊗ If a demon is bound, it must be kept bound or otherwise placed in chains; do not allow a demon to go free with anger in its heart.
- ⊗ A faustian may call upon his fellows for aid; they are not bound to give aid, but must hear and consider his plea.

Sorcerous Orders

These orders are minor powers in Hell – they lack the resources and reach of even the smallest Lesser House. The chief advantage is their political sway; demons are wary of sorcerers causing chaos by

shattering Covenants and binding demonic Lords. A single sorcerer could be assassinated, but kill one of an order and his fellows may retaliate. Sorcerous orders also allow faustians to share lore and standing.

Cult of the Beast

The oldest and least organised of the faustian orders, the Cult of the Beast is made up of sorcerers seduced by the power and pleasures of Hell. They are more demonic than the demons themselves, wilfully embracing the Corruption and sin of the Pit. They worship the demonic principle itself, the union of Divinity and Base Beast that gives rise to the hellkin. Bizarrely, they hold many of the hellkin in contempt, claiming that the demons of the Houses are unworthy of the heritage they embody.

Calling the Cult an organised group is being generous; if it were not for their communal temples, the members of the Cult would have no contact with each other. The Cult has a great number of low to medium-level sorcerers, but few have the discipline to master the more difficult aspects of magic. The Cult has some ties to the Riethii and Carthenay, but have no long-term alliances with any House. Their temples are scattered throughout Hell.

The Cult's leader is an ancient and possibly immortal half-demon called the Scarlet Rider.

Disciples of the Black Thorn

The Black Thorns are a new and ambitious band of sorcerers. They were originally allied to House Riethii, as their founder was brought into the *Infernum* by the Seducers. Following a disagreement, they broke free and are now allied with House Lictat. While the other faustian orders are careful not to upset the delicate balance between the hellkin and the sorcerers by not involving themselves significantly in House politics, the Black Thorns have proved more than willing to launch sorcerous assaults on even Grand Dukes and Hierarchs.

The Black Thorns covet the Faustian's Seat on the Council of Hierarchs; indeed, some suggest that Black Thorns may intend on claiming Lesser or even Great House status. Their ambition and resources from their Lictat alliance means that the Thorns are attracting support from many young sorcerers. They also avidly seek out potential apprentices. While the Thorns are still considerably smaller than the more established orders like the Malthians or Cult of the Beast, they are much more feared and respected by the hellkin.



To ensure their security, the Black Thorn leaders hide their faces and identities when meeting in the order's stronghold on the Sixth Circle.

House Malthus

Malthus was the name of one of the earliest mortal sorcerers seduced by the promises of House Zethu. The demons realised that mortals would more readily accept the corruption of magic if it was offered by a mortal instead of one of the hellkin, so they propelled Malthus to the throne of a Lesser House with almost indecent haste. For centuries, House Malthus contained most of the faustians – the chaos of the war in Hell and the greater dissemination of sorcery in the mortal world combined to break the Malthian influence.

Today, House Malthus is a faded shell of its past glory. The Malthian League has stolen much of its lore and members, while more ambitious groups like the Black Thorns offer a faster track to power. The upheavals that wrack House Zethu have also sent the Malthus spiralling down, forcing them to fend for themselves in the political quagmire of the Infernum for the first time ever. Already, the Sturrach and the Carthenay are looking greedily at the exposed Malthian estates.

The one notable virtue of the mortal's House is their unique noble mutation chain.

Chain of Malthus

The Malthian Chain enhances the sorcerer's power.

I – Corruption Manipulation (Blasphemous): The sorcerer may alter its effective Corruption level for the purposes of Covenants, mutations and spells. This costs seven iliaster per Corruption level and the effect lasts for one day per level of the sorcerer.

II – Sorcerer's Will: The sorcerer's mind becomes attuned to sorcery above all else. It gains a +5 bonus to Will saves for generating iliaster, but cannot now spend iliaster on manipulating fate.

III – Deathless: The sorcerer can infuse its soul into its domain. If he is killed, he will form a new body out of mud, scraps, insect shells and other debris within 3d6 days. The sorcerer can only be permanently killed by having its domain conquered by another demon Lord.

Malthian League

The Malthian League is an offshoot of the old House Malthus. It is a loose order of sorcerers who believe in the study of magic for its own sake. They avowedly refuse to deal with any of the Houses, although this tradition is more honoured in the breach than in the observance – while the Malthians crow about being outside the politics of Hell, individual members regularly consort with the hellkin.

The Malthians regularly travel back to the mortal world to gain new apprentices. They believe that with sufficient understanding of sorcery, they can transcend Hell and the mortal realm and attain divine power.

The Malthian Towers are mostly located in the Middle Hells and the First Circle.

Goetic Order

The Goetic Order is a small group of allied sorcerers, numbering no more than a dozen or so. They have a rather antagonistic attitude towards the hellkin; in the past, they have used sorcery to remove particularly cruel demon Lords and to help the Early tribes. They are rumoured to be an offshoot of the Malthians. The Cult of the Beast loathes the Goetic Order, and has helped the Infernum track several of these criminals down. To preserve itself, the Order has

gone underground, hiding in the Free Cities. Goetics are expected to use the *purification rite* to keep themselves free of Corruption.

The free Cities

To a new order in Hell!

History

The Heresy began in Dis. For the whole of 748 AF, a strange heat hung over the city, a malaise that went beyond the normal furnace-air and smog clouds that cover the industrial city with a thick skin of grime. Brawls and knifings were common on the streets. Eventually, when these petty disputes began to disrupt the city's productivity, the Lord of Dis – a Zethu noble named Luac – ordered its guards to restore order.

The Lord's commands were backed by the full force of Covenants with the guards, but they had no effect. One by one, the guards realised that their Lord no longer had any power over them. All across the City, the same discovery was made. All the oaths of Dis had been broken. The city exploded into anarchy.

It took almost three months for this reign of terror to ebb even slightly. External forces – specifically Zethu forces being sent to retake the city – united the populace, who had no intention of being trapped by the Houses once more. A city council was hastily formed to repel the invaders and to spread the Breaking of Oaths. Outlying cities like Mayhem were turned to the heresy and the weapons of that city were turned on the Zethu army. The heresy was now in full swing.

The heresy itself consists of a sorcerous ritual, copies of which were found nailed to doors throughout the city during the reign of terror along with copies of old speeches of Lictat from the time of Sturrach's War. Armed with this ritual, the demons of Dis could turn other cities into free cities – the spell required city walls as a focus for the rite. Also, any existing chains or bonds interfered with the spell, forcing the demons to free the dead and treat mortals as equals within the city when casting the ritual.

As armies of the Houses surrounded Dis, starvation began to threaten the populace. Strict rules were put into place to allocate iliaster and extract it from the emancipated dead. The city council was accused of corruption and overthrown a dozen times, while crime and thievery is now rampant. However, the folk of Dis are free, and that is a triumph unique to the Oathbreaker Cities.

Since the revolt of Dis, over a dozen cities of some importance have fallen to the Heresy and rumours of dissent are on the streets of many others. With the Great Houses tightening their control of the demons through Torture Palaces, the lure of freedom has a growing appeal for many demons.

Current Standing

Dis and Mayhem, the original two Free Cities, are the only two cities at open war with the Houses. Dis is besieged by forces from Sturrach, Carthenay, Riethii and Zethu, while Mayhem is besieged mainly by Sturrach and Zethu. The other free cities of note, such as Allsorrow on the Third Circle, are not yet under siege, but are being watched by the Houses. Oathbreakers – those who have clearly broken their Covenants – and Heretics – those trying to spread the heresy and the Breaking of Oaths to other cities – are criminals in the eyes of Infernal law and may be put to death at the whim of any demon who catches one. As almost every citizen of a Free City is an Oathbreaker or a Heretic, those of the Free Cities must tread carefully and in secrecy when abroad in the Infernum.



ascertain. There are thousands of small walled encampments in the Infernum, any of which could have been infected by the Heresy. Some places have claimed Free City status to attract heretics in order to execute them; other Free Cities have not revealed their true status to avoid being destroyed.

The following cities are in open rebellion against the Infernum:

- ⊗ Dis the Great on the Sixth Circle
- ⊗ Steelhole, on the Sixth Circle
- ⊗ Abrat, on the Sixth Circle
- ⊗ Coalmere, on the Sixth Circle
- ⊗ Mayhem, on the Fifth Circle
- ⊗ Ranc, on the Fifth Circle
- ⊗ Dolour, on the Fourth Circle
- ⊗ Peak Malice, on the Fourth Circle
- ⊗ Abyssus, on the Fourth Circle
- ⊗ Allsorrows, on the Third Circle
- ⊗ Gall, on the Third Circle
- ⊗ Fayditch Warren, on the Second Circle
- ⊗ Storm's Point on the Sunless Sea

Culture and Customs

The Free Cities are celebratory and joyous! They have thrown off the shackles of their oppressors and ushered a new order into Hell! Demons and mortals and damned work side by side towards a new and better life for all, a time of plenty and pleasure! It is only the corrupt and greedy nobles of the Houses, immortal pigs who consume too much and do too little that have perpetrated and perpetuated the iron-bound castes of the Infernum. With the Breaking of Oaths and the imposition of freedom, we shall overthrow those oppressors and take the bounty of the Pit for all those brave enough to embrace the new order!

Everyone in the Free Cities is expected to express loudly their support for the above propaganda, for the preachings of old Lictat and for their opposition to the corrupt rule of the Houses. Anyone who does uphold these principles, who does not call his fellows Citizen and show that he respects all the races of Hell equally, anyone who is not committed wholeheartedly to the cause – why, he must surely be a traitor and must be hauled into the Square of Executions.

The truth is that few in the Free Cities truly believe the propaganda. They are stuck with each other – in Dis at least, there is an army of thousands of Sturrach killers just outside the walls, so the folk of the Free City are stuck with each other and have to get along somehow. Seizing on a culture of forced unity was the only workable approach. It is largely only a gloss

Free City Ranks

House Rank	City Rank	Experience Bonus
Demon	—	0
Housefellow	Citizen	300
Devil	Respected Citizen	500
Daemon	Elder Citizen	1,000
Captain	District Captain	2,000
Baron	District Co-ordinator	3,000
Viscount	Quarter Co-ordinator	5,000
Earl	Committee Member	9,000
Duke	Mayor	12,000

As the Free Cities have not been established for long, they do not have their own mutation chains – yet. Advancement in the Free Cities is based on doing good works for the city and gaining the support of different city districts and quarters.

of unity, though; demons are still the rulers of the Free Cities, and the damned are still forced to work in the torture mills. Mortals have benefited the most from equality, as they have been freed from slavery and forced conversion to damned.

Dis is ruled by the City Council of Dis, which is made up of the eldest and most powerful entities in the city. As the city council has been assassinated in its entirety twice and summoned out for execution once, the current councillors hide their identities behind masks and titles. No-one is quite sure who is in charge in Dis, but there is a growing middle order of bureaucrats, politicians and arrogant young captains as well as a sizeable brute squad to maintain order and pass on the council's commands to the townsfolk. Disobeying the commands of the council is considered treason and punished by being rendered down for iliaster – this is both the most common crime and punishment in the Free Cities.

The other cities look to Dis for guidance, but the screamer lines between them have long since been cut and maintaining contact through sorcery is expensive and difficult. Fiendish messengers do sometimes thread the siege lines, and there is considerable black market traffic through the secret ways and sewers of Dis. The City of Industry is so important to the

The Breaking of Oaths

Prerequisites: None.

Components: Five iron markers (2 crowns, -10 per missing marker), a length of iron chain (2 Horns, -20)

Cost: Varies depending on the size of the city – see below

Casting Time: Three days

Sorcery DC (Int): 10.

Failure?: No effect.

Resist: None.

Effects: This spell requires that the five iron markers be buried around the circumference of the target city's wall – the spell only works on a city or other habitation with a discernible outer margin or boundary. The caster can be anywhere within the circumscribed area.

The spell's difficulty increases in places that are full of enslaved souls and chains. Each Covenant of Strength 10 or higher within the area increases the Sorcery DC by +1, while every slave pen, torture palace or other obvious symbol of oppression and Covenanting increases the DC by +5. Breaking chains and freeing slaves as the spell is being cast will help drop the Sorcery DC back down.

The cost of the spell varies depending on the size of the city being targeted:

City Size	Iliaster Cost	Average DC Increase
Village	5	+5
Small Town	10	+15
Large Town	15	+25
City	25	+75
Large City	50	+100
Metropolis	100	+200

If the spell is cast successfully, the oathbreaking begins. Any creature which spends the better part of a year and a day within the spell's area of effect (or within the area of effect of another casting of *the breaking of oaths*) has all their Covenants broken as described on page 75.

Examination of this spell – Knowledge (arcana) check (DC20) – shows that the ritual draws upon an existing magical effect active somewhere else. Instead of breaking the oaths itself, the ritual opens the way for this second force to do so.

Infernum that many of its factories keep running even when the city is at war with its suppliers and customers (House Zethu are kicking themselves for carefully placing their most important industrial base inside impregnable walls, then losing that city to the mob).

The desperate state of many of the Free Cities has forced them to rely on audacious and dangerous plots to break sieges, obtain iliaster, capture enemies or spread the Heresy to other places.

Holdings

The Free Cities have no true holdings outside their own walls. They have contacts with various criminal organisations and even in certain Early tribes, but they hold no territory in Hell.

Secrets of the Free Cities

The greatest secret of the Free Cities is where they came from, and that is a secret that has many potential truths. The ritual could be derived from the angelic sorcery of the Priests of the Morningstar, it could be

connected to the machinations of Isani of House Jelac or it could be an oblique stroke against House Zethu by one of the other Houses.

The Fortress Rite

Agents of the Free Cities have managed to infiltrate the fortress of Redhive, having shapeshifted into the form of biomechanicals. They have managed to plant the five iron markers necessary to *the breaking of oaths* within the fortress' walls, but lack a sorcerer of sufficient power to cast the spell. It is also unknown if the rite will work on a fortress as opposed to a city.

The Harrowers

The Harrowers are rather out of touch in Hell. Even the Early tribes have a better idea of current events in the Pit, as the Harrowers are besieged in the holy mountain of Outremer. The doctrine of the Free Cities would appeal to the mortals of the Knights of the Harrowing. Several mortal messengers have been sent to Outremer to ask for the Knights' aid in breaking the siege, but none have reached the holy mountain – or if they did, the Knights did not respond

to the plight of the city.

Mortal Tribes

We are come to Hell Early, but we are not alone here.

It is a truism in Hell that the mortal spirit is almost indomitable. The mortal ability to manipulate fate is testament to this, as is their ability to survive even in the Pit. Many thousands of mortals live in Hell.

The earliest record of a mortal tribe living outside the control of the Houses dates back to 111 AF, but it is possible there were unrecorded gouts before that. The era of the Early tribes truly began when the mighty slave Bor broke his chains and led two hundred slaves to freedom on the First Circle. These Sons of Bori had defied their Infernal masters and made a life for themselves in the wilderness of Upper Hell.

During the chaos of the wars, many more mortals escaped from the House slave pens or entered the Pit through gouts and portals. The tribe of the Branded, composed of escaped slaves, grew and grew as more mortals heard of the hope of freedom on the First Circle.

The third notable mortal faction, the Knights of the Harrowing, all entered Hell through a single great gout, bringing with them the fortress-mountain of Outremer. The Knights are quite unlike the other mortal factions of Hell, incorporating angels and damned into their numbers and fighting a war on the Infernum from within the Fifth Circle.

There are certain similarities of belief among all three major free-mortal factions:

- ✠ **Corruption is frowned upon.** While it is impossible for a mortal to live in Hell and remain completely free of Corruption, embracing the taint is a sign of demonic influence. A Corrupt mortal could be held in a Covenant by a demon, or might be showing the physical manifestation of unholy acts like murder or rape. Tribes with a sorcerer use the *rite of cleansing* to remove corruption before

it takes hold.

- ✠ **Demons are the enemy.** Consorting with a demon is a crime; being possessed or otherwise controlled is punishable by execution. This rule has been overlooked; indeed, the Bori mercenaries fight side by side with demons. Still, no demon is allowed access to a tribe's fastnesses and hidden refuges.
- ✠ **The Tribe is the Blood and the Life.** Every Early tribe member knows that his life is secondary compared to that of the tribe. The survival of the tribe is paramount. In times of famine, leave the old and weak to starve. In times of war, the warriors should hold the demons back while the others flee.
- ✠ **Water is Blood and Food is Life.** Starvation is a constant danger in the bleak lands of the First. Wasting or soiling supplies is punishable by death. Cannibalism is permitted in most tribes.
- ✠ **The Dead are dead to the Tribe.** The Early tribes reject their dead. A creature who dies in Hell becomes a damned soul, but these damned are not part of the tribe. The reasons for this vary from tribe to tribe; most agree that having damned souls hanging around will just draw the attention of the demons to the tribe. Others have been infiltrated by damned in the past, and so consider all the dead hopelessly demon-controlled. Some fastnesses have crowds of souls of the recently dead moaning outside their doors until they are driven away by their living kin. This is not a universal custom among the Early – the Harrowers' dead are still part of their order, while some isolated Early tribes keep their dead around as an underclass of servants and cannon fodder, or as honoured advisors and elders.

Early Tribe Ranks

Tribe Rank	Experience Bonus
Unblood	0
Blooded	300
Hunter	500
Warrior	1,000
Freeblood	2,000
Healer/Respected Warrior	3,000
Sage/Champion	5,000
Elder/Warmaster	9,000
Chieftain	12,000

Like the demons, the mortals of the Early tribes arrange themselves by rank. A character is given ranks up to Chieftain by his Chieftain; the chieftainship of a tribe requires that the character challenge the current holder to single combat. In the event of a Chieftain dying, then all Warriors of the tribe may participate. Titles such as Healer or Sage are given to those who cannot fight, but are still worthy of respect.

Tribes with sorcerers of sufficient skill to bind souls into weapons are permitted to do so with their damned, so long as the rite is done within three days of death.

The Sons of Borí

Hail to Bor, mightiest of the Sons of Man.

History

This is the tale of Bor.

Bor was the mightiest of men. When still a boy, he could wrestle a full-grown hulk to the ground. Sword and axe were quick to leap into his hands. Not few were the bodies he left behind him and glorious were his victories. He hurled many hellkin to the Pits for his demon Lord and was accounted mighty even among the elder demons.

Yet still, Bor was a slave. His anger rose up. He broke the chains and bent open the bars of his cage, and took the two hundred strongest slaves he could find with him. At the head of this army, Bor climbed up the Pit.

On the Fifth Circle, he slaughtered ten thousand demons and still he thirsted for more.

On the Fourth, he swam the Phlegthon and the Lethe to lead the demons on a merry chase around in circles around the Circle, for Bor was as cunning as he was strong.

On the Third, he cut the canals open with his axe and filled them with his spit, to drown the demons who chased him.

On the Second, he raised up the mountains as a great wall to protect his followers from the hellkin.

And when Bor saw the desert of the First, he said 'this is the place where I shall dwell, for I will have nothing that demons have touched'.

Bor sired many sons by many women, and each of them was almost as great a warrior as he was. He made them into an army and appointed the best of them Chiefs-of-War. The Sons of Bor slaughtered the demons who chased them, until no hellkin dared peek beyond the Mountains of the Tempest. There was peace for a time, so Bor appointed the wisest of his daughters as Chiefs-of-Peace, that the tribe might grow strong until war came again.

When the days of his life were at an end, Bor called



his Sons and Daughters together and said 'I will not have my soul be a thing for demons to play with and suckle on. Bring me anvil and hammer, for as I die, my shade will hammer myself into my axe, and the best of my sons shall carry it.'

This is the tale of Bor.

The Bori have followed their grandfather's path for generations. They embraced sorcery when it was discovered, for pragmatism is among the highest virtues of the Bori. Strength of arms is another great virtue, so the Bori are great warriors who have fought as mercenaries throughout the Pit. The third virtue is pride; every Bori knows that the blood of Bor runs in his veins, and that he shall bow to no hellkin while he still lives.

Current Standing

The Bori are the most infamous of the Early tribes. They are especially hated by the hellkin for the long centuries of their defiance, although they have also won a grudging respect from those who have fought them in battle. They have little contact with the other Early tribes; the Bori have been in Hell longer than

any others, and they are strange and twisted compared to the gentler, less spartan ways of the other tribes.

Culture & Customs

The Bori culture is one of survival at all costs. The tribe must be preserved. Anything that weakens or endangers the tribe must be purged immediately. If a man is too old to fight, or a woman to bear children, and they lack useful skills like sorcery, let them die. If a child is sickly or corrupted, let it die. If a Bori steals or lies or shows cowardice, let him die. The few Bori who are not winnowed out by this harsh regime or the dangers of Hell are superlative warriors and killers, although newcomers to Hell would argue that the Bori have sacrificed far too much of their humanity in order to survive.

Life is not all doom and gloom inside the fastnesses of the Bori; they do have their feasts and celebrations of victory, but the Bori are obsessed with death and dying well. It is said that Bor's only sorrow was that no demon could best him in battle, and thus he was condemned to the ignoble fate of old age and soulforging instead of a glorious death in the service of his kin.

The Bori are notoriously paranoid; seeing as they are virtually unbeatable in force of arms (they could be destroyed by a sufficiently large and well-armed demon force, but the cost would surely outweigh the spoils of the war), the normal route for demonic assault is through infiltration or possession. They only deal with the other Early tribes in the rarest of circumstances. They deal with demons through a special caste of Bori, called the Serpent Marks. The Serpent Marks are degraded and corrupted members of the Bori, who chose joining the Marks instead of death. Serpent Marks trade with the Third Circle farms for food and negotiate the Bori mercenary contracts in Golgotha.

Holdings

The Bori territories are described on page 45 of the *Infernography* chapter. They have no holdings outside this territory.

Notable Members

The three greatest chiefs – Peace-Chief, War-Chief and Sorcerer – are called the Eldest of the Bori.

Furia, the Eldest Sorcerer of the Bori was born in the tribe to the previous war-chief. She was a double disappointment to her father, being born a girl and with a lame hand. Under normal circumstances, the

child would have been killed and her soul bound into a weapon, but her father's position allowed him to spare her life (the disgrace cost him the title of war-chief at the next council). Furia rewarded her father's sacrifice by mastering the basics of sorcery before she was seven and became the youngest Eldest Sorcerer in the history of the tribe. Still, her enemies whisper that she has no right to be alive and she should have been killed at birth.

Furia replaced her lame hand with an ornate silver claw, into which she bound the spirit of her father. This hand makes her a skilled combatant as well as an expert sorcerer.

The Peace-Chief of the Bori is an elderly woman called Maria. She is the single most respected individual in the tribe, having risen through the camps. She is known as a peacemaker, having brought warring factions together in the past and negotiated deals with demons to preserve the borders of the Bori lands, but she is equally adept at the art of war, having served one year as Eldest war-leader before taking her current position.

Maria's high standing in the Bori makes her a target for demonic assassins. The attempts to kill her all obviously failed, but a deceiver called G'jra managed to slip past her wards and possess Maria temporarily. The demon has been forced into dormancy, but resists all attempts at exorcism. Being compromised by a demon is grounds for execution in Bori law, but Maria has been allowed to keep her condition secret by the Council of Peace-Chiefs.

Finally, the Eldest War-Chief of the Bori is Kallum. He took his place as greatest warrior in the Bori by defeating Anagon, the previous War-Chief and husband of Maria. Kallum is known throughout Infernal society as a skilled mercenary – his whole life has been spent on campaigns in the Lower Circles and his election as War-Chief was the first time he ever visited his ancestral home-lands. Kallum is still adjusting to his new role, but has already clashed with Maria several times.

Secrets of the Bori

The Bori have few secrets. Their innermost strongholds have never been uncovered by the demons of the Infernum, but their supply routes are vulnerable. If it were not for the reputation of the Bori mercenaries, the tribe would be surrounded and starved out.

The Bori mercenaries are a source of worry for some elders of the tribe. They spent many years in

the corrupt depths of the Pit before returning home. The mercenaries are honoured warriors, but most are tainted to a far higher degree than those Bori who never stepped out of the First Circle. More and more of the Sons of Bor are being born corrupt thanks to their sires' or mothers' taint, forcing more and more branches of the tribe to abolish the tradition of abandoning tainted infants to the elements.

The Branded

Just keep climbing. It's safe there. Just a little higher in Hell.

History

The history of the Branded is fragmented into half-told stories, old teaching songs, rumours and folk wisdom, broken by deaths and long years of sorrow. The tribe is composed mainly of escaped slaves and their descendants, but while the Bori are small and hard, the sprawling tribe of the Branded take in every mortal they can find. They are less a tribe than a movement, a blind reflex towards freedom and release from suffering, without any history or memory.

At times, the Branded have been utterly wiped out by slavers or Glabretchi disease-bombs, but the reflex endures. More slaves broke out from the pens and fled up the Pit, where they found the old refuges and hiding places of the Branded and the tribe began again.

The current form of the Branded is the most organised the tribe has ever been, thanks to the advent of the Broken Chain.

The Broken Chain is a tribe within the tribe, an organisation of Branded who have established a secure fastness in the heart of their territory. The Broken Chain send raiders down the Pit to help other slaves become free, on the theory that if the Houses are busy securing their own borders instead of hunting the Branded, the rest of the Branded will have time to find a safe place on the First Circle. There are simply too many refugees fleeing the Houses for the Broken Chain to protect them all, however, so death and starvation stalk the Branded territory just as much as demons do.

The Broken Chain was originally founded by newcomer mortals who came in through a hellgout. They were organised and determined enough to form a strong core for the tribe.

Current Standing

Most of the Branded are crowded into the ravines of the First Circle, hiding from the demons who haunt their nightmares. They wear tattered rags against the cold, and shelter from the dust storms and corruption beneath thin spawn-leather coverings. They have little food and brackish water to drink, and will soon die unless they are enslaved again.

The Branded are little more than a nuisance to the Infernum. Some demons remark that the mortals fleeing into the First Circle are a little like sea-turtle hatchlings running down a beach; most of the little pale blind soft wriggling things will get picked off by predators and natural hazards, who cluster around the shoreline waiting for the feast. The few Branded who survive can hide out for years in the wilderness, but there are always more mortals to be born in the Pits.

The Branded are sometimes harvested by demon Houses, usually the Oblurott or Glabretchi. Of late, House Lictat's scouts have been seen in the Empty Circle. One of those three Houses is likely to attack the Branded within the next few years – the Lictat are busy building their home estates on the Second, the Oblurott are merrily making war with House Sturrach, so the Glabretchi are the most likely candidates.

Culture & Customs

Most Branded have no culture except a shared experience of suffering at the hands of the demons. The few Branded who were born free or come from hellgouts and portals can hardly understand the fury and pain felt by these survivors. The chains of the slave pens still hold the Branded.

The raiding party is the one common tradition of the Branded. Small groups slip back down the Pit to the torture palaces and slave pens and try to free both damned and mortals. The damned are abandoned by most Branded, as the Houses have been known to hide agents in the pens who will betray the raiders. House Oblurott is the most common target for these raids. The Branded have little in the way of equipment or training, but make up for it with determination.

The Broken Chain organise their own raiding parties, but supplies are the main target of these attacks.

Holdings

The Branded territory is vast indeed, but includes little in the way of important sites like soul fields or running water. It was inhabited by the Branded purely because it was empty and therefore safe.



The Broken Chain have a great cave-city called Purgatory hidden in the depths of their territory. Although the cave shows signs of having been inhabited in the distant past, it was empty when the Chain found it and made it their home. As no living demon knows where Purgatory is, it has been expanded into a great refuge for many thousand of the Branded.

Notable Members

The current master of the Broken Chain escaped from the slave pits of the Astyanath. Few of the mortal slaves from that deep in the Pit every make it as far as the First Circle. He has endured great pain, and bears the scars to prove it.

He calls himself **Scar**. It's his little joke.

Scar is the best thief and survivor in the Pit. He became leader of the Broken Chain when the previous leader was slain by a Haimon stalker. For the man in charge of an organisation dedicated to protecting mortals from the dangers of the Pit, Scar seems to have little interest in leaving Purgatory or in the fate of the Branded. He gives the benefit of his wisdom and experience when his fellow Broken Chainers ask it, but he launches no raiding parties and gives few

commands of his own volition. He just sits in his simple house in the darkness of the cave, toying with an old and rusted knife.

Scar's second-in-command and the effective leader of the Branded is an ex-military officer drawn in through a hellgout. **Captain Liz Sherwood** was on patrol in a muddy warzone when the corpses started rising around her as zombies and the sky caught fire. Sherwood considers the Branded war on Hell as a guerrilla action against a superior foe, and has not quite accepted how dire her situation is. Her problems are compounded by a Bori warlord who has become infatuated with her, but whose idea of courtship involves a large club and dragging her back to his cave by her hair.

Secrets of the Branded

The Branded have few secrets. The only secret knowledge they want is the secret of how to survive in Hell.

Knights of the Harrowing

Deus vult!

History

Mortal history does not remember the Knights of the Harrowing. The Twisting effect of the hellgout that drew them into the Pit ensures this. Their name has been – mostly – erased from the records of the Catholic Church in Rome; their deeds have been forgotten or attributed to others. Their previous symbol, that of a charging crusader on horseback, is still seen sometimes on crumbling walls in the Holy Land or in the south of France. In the time of the second to the fourth crusade, the order was known as the Knights of the Sepulchre, a brother order to the Templars and Hospitallers. Their special purpose was the reclamation of the tomb where Christ had laid for three days.

The Knights established a great fortress on a mountaintop in the Christian kingdom of Outremer, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. There, they held out against their enemies for centuries while the armies of Christendom surged about on one disastrous crusade after another. The Knights Sepulchre never attained the fame of the Hospitallers or the wealth of the Templars, but their fortress grew ever stronger and their knights ever more faithful and humble.

Their brother order, the Templars, fell to darkness. They began worshipping an effigy of a head called Baphomet, which taught them terrible, demonic rites. In secret, the Sepulchres acted, stealing the original brazen head from the Templar compound in Jerusalem. The brazen head attempted to corrupt the Knights Sepulchre too, but instead they interrogated it to learn all they could of Hell. The head spoke to them of sorcery, and how one with sufficient knowledge of the dark arts could slip away into the underworld while still alive and there enjoy an immortal life of pleasure and sin for ever. The Grand Master of the Knights, one Tobias de Lyons, listened carefully to the lies of the brazen head and conceived of the greatest crusade possible.

He began to make preparations, secretly at first, but then with the support and faith of his men. Their fortress was reinforced and re-supplied. New recruits were brought from all over Christendom. In secret, triple-sealed letters, Tobias sent word to Rome of his intention. He even freed prisoners accused of sorcery from the jails of ruined Byzantium, promising them freedom if they would aid him.

The efforts of the Knights would perhaps have come to nothing if it were not for the accidental Great Gout created by Zethu researchers. As the Byzantine sorcerers worked their petty spells, they managed to seize onto the vast rupture between the worlds and accomplished by chance what they could not have done by design. The whole mountains of the Knights of the Sepulchre was torn from the mortal world and plunged into Hell.

It was a new crusade against Hell itself. The order changed its name to the Knights of the Harrowing and swore a terrible new oath – to fight against the demons until Hell was scoured clean. Proudly and bravely, clad in shimmering cloaks of red and white bearing the crusader cross, the Knights rode out. Their first victory was over a band of unaligned beggar-demons, who were chasing a single lost soul across the bloody mire. Their second was over a pack of hellhounds, who the knights trampled with their horses. Their third was over a Sturrach scouting party.

Their first defeat was when the vanguard of the Sturrach army came upon them. Many of the knights were slaughtered, but the rest managed to retreat in good order to their fortress, now renamed Outremer. Obviously, faith alone was not going to deliver Hell to them, any more than faith alone had brought the crusaders to Jerusalem.

Fortune smiled on the knights (and provided the inspiration for their new symbol). An angel fell into their courtyard. This was no proud captain of the host, sent to guide and inspire them in their darkest hour. This was the last survivor of the Sword of Light, a band of angels who slew Glabretch itself and had been hounded for this victory. For a hundred and twenty years, the angel Aoul had forced himself to fight both against the demons and the putrid diseases that wracked his frame. Now, at the moment his strength gave out, he saw a strange new sight on the Fifth Circle and dived towards it. Before he died, Aoul told the knights much about their new home, about the different natures of demons and the damned. The knights also gained first-hand experience of the damned, when a few of souls of the knights slain by the Sturrach army arrived at the gates of the fortress. Tobias gave thanks for this blessing – not only did he now know how to wage war in Hell, but also any of his knights who died but were not captured could return to fight again.

The angel warned the Harrowers of the necessity of defensive sorcery, which added to the protective ability of their fortress. These barriers were erected just in time, as an infuriated House Sturrach sent an army to besiege the Harrower fortress. The knights were quite unlike any force the Bloody army had faced, being considerably more disciplined and well-supplied than any other mortals. Still, the knights were hard-pressed until a Riethii army broke the siege. The Riethii needed a group of skilled mortal warriors to attack a Carthenay torture palace on the Seventh Circle, and their usual Bori mercenaries were already engaged. Would the knights mind killing some demons for pay?

Some among the knights argued that this would corrupt their holy mission, but the order needed some relief from the siege. Tobias – nearing the end of his life, although he continues to rule the order as a soul – agreed to send a dozen knights. Only two returned, although another three are still in the thrall of their Riethii seducers.

The Knights of the Harrowing have taken in any who have proved willing to fight against the tyranny of Hell. The majority of them are dead, but there is a sizeable minority of living knights and more than a few angels. The quick are given preference over the dead, but the knights treat their deceased brethren much more fairly than the Early tribes do.

The war on Hell is ongoing. In the century since their arrival, they have defied all attempts to remove them and have done significant damage to several Houses.

Harrower Ranks

Harrower Rank	Experience Bonus
Initiate	0
Squire	300
Knight/Priest	500
Lord Knight	1,000
Knight Commander/ Bishop	2,000
Lord Commander	3,000
High Commander/ Cardinal	5,000
Master	9,000
Grand Master	12,000

They consider the Sturrach and the Astyanath to be their special foes, although Carthenay still bears a grudge for the destruction of its torture palace.

Current Standing

The knights are one of the best organised factions in Hell. They were well prepared to enter Hell, so they never fell victim to the starvation and panic that ruined many Early tribes. Their fortress is as secure as it can be and the Free City revolt has drawn many of its besiegers away. The Harrowers are currently relatively free to act.

Culture & Customs

The knights are still at heart an order of warrior monks, obeying the rule laid down for them by Saint Bernard in the 14th century (mortal time). They have of course had to adapt – Christians of later centuries (but who arrived in Hell soon after the Harrowers, or even before in some cases because of the vagrancies of the Brass Pillars) have strange customs and beliefs even if their souls are pure. There are pagans, Jews and Mohammedans who are willing to fight for the order. According to Harrower doctrine, such virtuous pagans can inherit Hell as their reward when the war is over and the Christian knights ascend into Heaven. There is therefore an outer order of lay knights, and an inner order of knights who attend Mass and have taken holy orders.

Just as they did for pilgrims travelling to the holy land, the Harrowers escort escaped slaves up the Pit to the promised land of the First Circle (though it is as

empty a promise as it is an empty land). Some slaves join the knights, but only those strong enough to fight are taken. The knights are not a charitable institution, and cannot afford dead weight.

The damned and angels may join the order, although the living are especially cherished.

Holdings

The primary fortress of the Knights of the Harrowing is the great fortified burg they have named Outremer after their vanished kingdom. The mountain is now covered in castles and the ruins of castles, the mark of long years of siege by the demons. There is a cathedral atop the mountain with a dome of bright marble that can be seen for miles. The inside of the mountain is riddled with dungeons and tunnels; the knights had dwelt there for centuries before coming to Hell. The caves within the mountain contain unnatural farms which produce food for the living knights – and their living steeds, for the Harrowers still have a few living horses and dogs.

Outremer is protected by sorcery as well as fortifications. The knights permit sorcerers to join the outer order, and the priests all learn at least the Three Keys and the *rite of cleansing*.

The order has several other outposts and refuges higher in Hell, although these are much less impressive than Outremer. Those expecting crusader towers and keeps in Upper Hell will be disappointed by the sight of fortified caves and mud shacks, but these lesser outposts are vital links in the Harrower path back up the Pit when they escort 'pilgrims' – escaped slaves and souls, seeking freedom in the empty wilderness.

Notable Members

The knights are still lead by Sir Tobias de Lyons; knight, crusader, monk and damned soul. While it is known that he is dead by all the knights, none of them dare mention it to their strict master. It would be impolite, and Sir Tobias' wisdom and piety are undiminished by his unliving state. Sir Tobias is the Grand Master of the Order; three Masters serve him, and then there are Commanders, Lord Knights, Knights, Squires and Initiates.

Master Tercel is the highest-ranked angel within the Knights of the Harrowing. He is a young and relatively inexperienced angel, who has a natural knack for aerial combat. Tercel is especially hated by Blackwing of House Sturrach, but the two have yet to meet in battle.



There are ordained priests of the Church of Rome in Hell. Their traditions come from a time before Reformations and Luther's schisms. The master of these priests is Cardinal Leo, called the Confessor of the Dead. Matters theological occupy the attention of most of these priests; being in Hell and cut off from Heaven and, more importantly, Rome means that much of the church doctrine must be rewritten and reinterpreted. The priests are expected to learn at least a little sorcery. The mortal ability to control iliastr and fate in Hell is considered to be a preternatural gift from God, for which the priests and knights give thanks every day.

Secrets of the Knights of the Harrowing

Most demons believe that the knights were drawn into Hell through a gout and were just as terrified and confused as any other newcomer victim. The knights know that they rode into Hell deliberately, although

just how much of their success was down to Zethu accident and mischance escapes them.

Treasures of the Sepulchre

The knights were in the Holy Land for some decades before entering Hell. During that time, they acquired many treasures from Jerusalem and the other kingdoms they conquered. Gold and jewels, however beautiful, are of little value in Hell. The lay knights whisper of more significant items. The spear that pierced Christ's side that promises invincibility in battle, the cup that held his blood and brings purity and renewal to any, no matter how fallen... surely Tobias, a great strategist and greater theologian, would not willingly enter Hell unless he had a weapon to use against the adversary...

The Pilgrim Knights

At the same time a dozen knights were sent Down to aid the Riethii, another score of knights were sent out by Tobias to explore the Infernal kingdom, to measure its size and learn the number and nature of its inhabitants. These pilgrim knights or their shades have yet to return to Outremer, although signs of their passage – symbols carved into rocks, demon bodies slain by crusader lances, tales of heroism and knight-errantry – are sometimes found in the strangest places in the Pit. Even the abhorei have heard tell of these pilgrim knights, who could still be alive thanks to the time-warping qualities of travel away from the clocks of Hell.

ADVERSARIES

How many dwell in the Pit?
A number beyond count and comprehension.

The Infernum is a desolate wasteland, but there are still millions upon millions of creatures living within its fiery walls. The vast majority of these are damned souls, suffering in the torture palaces or toiling in the fields – or floating on the hot winds from the Pit having been reduced to wastrel ghosts. Each of the Houses has millions of demons in their ranks, and the number of independent or renegade hellkin is growing by the day. The number of spawn is many times that of demons, although most are little more than insects or vermin.

Beyond the Infernum itself, Hell becomes even more dangerous. On the far side of the Sunless Sea is the land of Abhor, from where the surgeon-thieves of the abhorei send their raiding galleons. Mysterious benandanti and brokenlanders attack the Infernum from their own far-off realms, striking without warning and without mercy.

Still, the most dangerous creatures in the Pit are the demons themselves.

Base States

This chapter contains the base state for numerous creature types, as well as sample creatures in each type. These base states work identically to the rules for character types in *Book of the Damned* and those rules should be referenced when generating new creatures. Each base state lists the following values for the creature type:

- ⊗ **Hit Dice:** What sort of dice the creature uses to determine its hit points. Average hit points per Hit Dice are listed for each creature. A creature's total number of Hit Dice is effectively its level.
- ⊗ **Base Attack Bonus**
- ⊗ **Saving Throws:** Creatures have good or bad saving throws as listed here. Cross-reference the creature's Hit Dice total with its good or bad saving throws to determine its base saving throw bonuses, then add ability score modifiers as normal.
- ⊗ **Skills:** How many skill points the creature gains per Hit Dice (x4 normal for the first Hit Dice). If a creature does not list favoured skills, then any skills it has are favoured for that creature.
- ⊗ **Feats:** Unless otherwise noted, a creature type has one feat plus one extra feat per three Hit Dice.

- ⊗ **Traits:** This section notes any special abilities or features that all creatures of that type possess.

Challenge Ratings

Each creature lists a challenge rating. The rating indicates the level that the characters should be to have a good chance of defeating the foe. A party is assumed to have three to five members; unusually large or small groups should obviously face stronger or weaker foes. A group of characters is almost certain to beat an equal-CR foe, but use some iliaster or other expendable resources to do so. A fight with a foe whose CR is one or two levels higher than that of the party should be challenging and potentially lethal. A CR that is three or more levels higher is very likely to result in the party getting slaughtered. Obviously, the reverse is also true; encounters with creatures whose CR is less than the average party level will result in the characters easily defeating their foes, possibly even doing so without losing any hit points or iliaster.

The challenge rating of a creature applies best when the encounter plays to the creature's strength. A 12th level hulk has a CR of 12, for example, but the hulk is unlikely to excel in a diplomatic argument or social situation. Similarly, few imps are dangerous fighters, but they excel as thieves, spies and connivers. Hulks are made for fighting, so it should only count as a CR12 encounter if the characters have to defeat or bypass the hulk in combat. This does not mean that characters must beat the hulk in a fight to get the full experience reward; creative solutions to challenges should always be rewarded. It means that if a foe is encountered in a situation that does not suit it, it is not as tough as it would be normally and so counts as being less of a challenge.

Advancement

Creatures can advance in Hit Dice, just like characters can advance in level. This advancement works in exactly the same way; the creature gains extra hit points and skill points. It gains a new feat every third Hit Dice and its base attack bonus and saving throws may improve. If it has mutations or other abilities that force enemies to make saving throws, the DCs for these abilities are calculated as normal (10 + ½ Hit Dice + an ability modifier – Constitution for Fortitude saves, Dexterity for Reflex saves and Charisma for Will saves).

Some creatures grow larger as they advance. Spawn are particular prone to this; increase the spawn's size by one category if it advances by half its Hit Dice or more.

Swarm Subtype

A swarm is a collection of Fine, Diminutive or Tiny creatures that acts as a single creature. A swarm has the characteristics of its type, except as noted here. A swarm has a single pool of Hit Dice and hit points, a single initiative modifier, a single speed and a single Armour Class. A swarm makes saving throws as a single creature. A single swarm occupies a square (if it is made up of non-flying creatures) or a cube (of flying creatures) 10 feet on a side, but its reach is 0 feet, like its component creatures.

In order to attack, it moves into an opponent's space, which provokes an attack of opportunity. It can occupy the same space as a creature of any size, since it crawls all over its prey. A swarm can move through squares occupied by enemies and vice versa without impediment, although the swarm provokes an attack of opportunity if it does so. A swarm can move through cracks or holes large enough for its component creatures.

A swarm of Tiny creatures consists of 300 non-flying creatures or 1,000 flying creatures. A swarm of Diminutive creatures consists of 1,500 non-flying creatures or 5,000 flying creatures. A swarm of Fine creatures consists of 10,000 creatures, whether they are flying or not. Swarms of non-flying creatures include many more creatures than could normally fit in a 10-foot square based on their normal space, because creatures in a swarm are packed tightly together and generally crawl over each other and their prey when moving or attacking. Larger swarms are represented by multiples of single swarms. The area occupied by a large swarm is completely shapeable, though the swarm usually remains in contiguous squares.

Traits: A swarm has no clear front or back and no discernible anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or flanking. A swarm made up of Tiny creatures takes half damage from slashing and piercing weapons. A swarm composed of Fine or Diminutive creatures is immune to all weapon damage. Reducing a swarm to 0 hit points or lower causes it to break up, though damage taken until that point does not degrade its ability to attack or resist attack. Swarms are never staggered or reduced to a dying state by damage. Also, they cannot be tripped, grappled or bull rushed and they cannot grapple an opponent.

A swarm is immune to any effect that targets a specific number of creatures with the exception of mind-affecting effects if the swarm has an Intelligence score and a hive mind. A swarm takes half again as much damage (+50%) from effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and or hellcannon bursts.

Swarms made up of Diminutive or Fine creatures are susceptible to high winds. For purposes of determining the effects of wind on a swarm, treat the swarm as a creature of the same size as its constituent creatures. A swarm rendered unconscious by means of nonlethal damage becomes disorganised and dispersed, and does not reform until its hit points exceed its nonlethal damage.

Swarm Attack: Creatures with the swarm subtype do not make standard melee attacks. Instead, they deal automatic damage to any creature whose space they occupy at the end of their move, with no attack roll needed. Swarm attacks are not subject to a miss chance for concealment or cover. A swarm's statistics block has 'swarm' in the Attack and Full Attack entries, with no attack bonus given. The amount of damage a swarm deals is based on its Hit Dice, as shown below.

Swarm HD	Swarm Base Damage
1–5	1d6
6–10	2d6
11–15	3d6
16–20	4d6
21 or more	5d6

Some swarms also have acid, poison, blood drain or other special attacks in addition to normal damage.

Swarms do not threaten creatures in their square and do not make attacks of opportunity with their swarm attack. However, they distract foes whose squares they occupy, as described below.

Distraction: Any living creature vulnerable to a swarm's damage that begins its turn with a swarm in its square is nauseated for 1 round; a Fortitude save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ swarm's HD + swarm's Con modifier; the exact DC is given in a swarm's description) negates the effect. Spellcasting or concentrating on spells within the area of a swarm requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills that involve patience and concentration requires a DC 20 Concentration check.

Abhorei

The parasite-demons from the far side of the Sunless Sea are avowed enemies of their cousins in the Infernum. Unlike their Infernal counterparts, abhorei do not torture mortal souls for iliaster. Instead, they graft themselves to living hosts and sap their life energy to replenish themselves.

An abhorei without a host cannot do anything – the race is so dependant on their hosts that they are utterly helpless when separated. Abhorei larvae from the spawning pits are immediately attached by the surgeons to a living host, usually a spawn. The abhorei prefer demonic or mortal hosts though, as these tend to be more powerful and sensitive.

Abhorei Base State

- ⊗ d4 Hit Dice. The hit points of an abhorei are added to those of the host.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to total Hit Dice. The base attack bonus of the abhorei replaces that of the host.
- ⊗ Good Will saves, Poor Reflex and Fortitude saves when ungrafted. Use the saving throws of the host for Fortitude and Reflex saves.
- ⊗ Skill points equal to (4 + Int modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die. Abhorei skills that are Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma-based replace such skills of the host; the host's Strength, Constitution and Dexterity-based skills replace those of the abhorei, with the exception of Constitution.
- ⊗ An abhorei starts with one feat and gains one feat every three levels.

Traits: An abhorei possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry):

- ⊗ Darkvision.
- ⊗ Abhorei determine their ability scores as normal. Their Strength, Dexterity and Constitution modifiers are applied to the ability scores of the host; the abhorei's Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma replace those of the host entirely.
- ⊗ Abhorei always have Heal and Torture as favoured skills, in addition to another eight skills of their choice.
- ⊗ Abhorei count as demons for the purposes of Sorcery, warding and Covenants. They have an effective Corruption of 20.
- ⊗ Abhorei gain one random mutation every three levels, starting at 2nd level. They gain one chosen level every third level, starting at 3rd level.
- ⊗ Abhorei have no breed or House mutations, but do gain abilities as follows:

Level Ability

- 1st **Graft:** The abhorei can now be attached to a living host. This requires a Heal check at DC 20.
- 4th **Fast Healing:** The abhorei now regains one hit point every hour.
- 7th **Crawl:** The abhorei can now take Move actions and free actions while not attached to a host.
- 10th **Fast Healing:** The abhorei now regains one hit point every 10 minutes.
- 13th **Force Attach:** If an abhorei's host is grappling with another viable host, the abhorei can attempt to transfer itself from its current host to the other. This requires a Heal check by the abhorei, resisted by a Fortitude save from the victim. If the Heal check is successful, the abhorei begins to physically possess the host. If the abhorei wins possession, even for one round, it is permanently attached and can keep trying to possess the foe.
- 16th **Fast Healing:** The abhorei now regains one hit point every minute (ten rounds).
- 19th **Improved Force Attach:** The abhorei now has a +4 racial bonus to attach attempts and Possession attempts.
- 22nd **Fast Healing:** The abhorei now regains one hit point every round.
- 25th **Greater Force Attach:** The abhorei now has a +6 racial bonus to attach attempts and Possession attempts.
- 28th **Fast Healing:** The abhorei now regains three hit points every round.

- ⊗ **Iliaster:** Like demons, abhorei must spend iliaster each day equal to their level or enter Dissolution. Unlike demons, however, abhorei do not have an iliaster reserve. Instead, abhorei spend hit points from their hosts. One hit point drained from a host becomes one point of iliaster. These hit points heal naturally (one point per Hit Dice). Abhorei can spend their own hit points in this fashion. An abhorei can spend the iliaster of its host instead of spending hit points, but cannot metabolise plasmic or other forms of extracted iliaster.
- ⊗ **Possession:** While attached to a host, the abhorei is essentially possessing the victim's body. The victim can attempt to resist this possession as normal, although the abhorei tend to be very skilled at defeating enemies in mental combat. This is not a psychic effect; the tendrils of the abhorei penetrate deep into the body of the victim, consuming them on a physical level too.

Abhorei can be bonded to animals, angels, demons, mortals, half-demons and spawn, but not to damned souls, biomechanicals or constructs.

- ⊗ **Challenge Ratings:** The challenge rating of an abhorei is equal to half the CR of the host plus the level of the abhorei.

An abhorei can only be grafted to a creature of size equal to or larger than itself. An abhorei's size depends on its level.

Hit Dice	Size
1-5	Small
6-15	Medium
16-20	Large
21-25	Huge
26-30	Gargantuan

Abhorei Diplomat (4th level Abhorei)

Small Abhorei

Hit Dice: 4d4+4 (14 hp)

Initiative: -1

Speed: 0 ft.

Armour Class: 10 (+1 size, -1 Dex), touch 10, flat-footed 10

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+4

Attack: -

Full Attack: -

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +6

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: -

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff+11, Diplomacy+13, Gather Information +8, Heal +7, Intimidate +8, Sense Motive +7, Torture +7

Feats: Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft, Fast Healing 1/Hour
- ⊗ **Monstrous Strength:** Brute Force (1½ Strength for breaking)
- ⊗ **Hungry Mind:** Devouring Thoughts (1 iliaster/Will save (DC 15 or demon can read target's thoughts))

Abhorei diplomats are lower-caste creatures within their society; as they must deal with the tainted demons of the Infernum, they are automatically suspect.

They invariably get the weakest and smallest hosts, restricting them from reaching their full growth.

When bonded to a riding spawn:

Bonded Abhorei Diplomat

Large Spawn/Abhorei Hybrid

Hit Dice: 4d10+4 plus 4d4+4 (40 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+10

Attack: Kick +5 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: 2 kicks +5 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff+11, Diplomacy+13, Gather Information +8, Heal +7, Intimidate +8, Jump +13, Listen +2, Spot +2, Sense Motive +7, Torture +7

Feats: Run, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

- ⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft, Fast Healing 1/Hour
- ⊗ **Monstrous Strength:** Brute Force (1½ Strength for breaking)
- ⊗ **Hungry Mind:** Devouring Thoughts (1 iliaster/Will save (DC 15 or demon can read target's thoughts))

Challenge Rating: 5

This creature resembles a riding spawn, but an ugly mass of tendrils and eyes has been grafted to the back of its head and neck. It moves with a strange certainty and speaks eloquently.

The diplomats of the abhorei are employed rarely; the grafted dislike the wild excesses and joys of the Infernum, so contact is kept to a minimum. The abhorei are essentially intellectuals; they view flesh as a tool, nothing more. They especially despise the blood-lust of the Sturrach and the indulgences of the Riethii, but all the Infernum is tainted by physicality. Far better, say the abhorei, to wear meat and bone as freely as one wears cloth or steel – an outer shell that means nothing to the spirit within.

The diplomats are those abhorei who can hide their distaste for the demons and engage in trade with them. The abhorei desire slaves above all else, more living bodies for the grafting yards. They trade treasures and strange things dragged out of the tunnels.

Abhorei Surgeon (10th level Abhorei)

Medium Abhorei

Hit Dice: 10d4 (25 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 0 ft.

Armour Class: 13 (+3 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 10

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+9

Attack: –

Full Attack: –

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +8

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +14, Concentration +13, Craft (fleshworking) +9, Diplomacy +9, Heal +21, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (infernography) +18

Feats: Related Knowledge (Heal and Knowledge (arcana)), Simple Weapons Proficiency, Skill Focus (Heal), Weapon Finesse (scalpel)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft, Fast Healing 1/10 Minutes, Crawl
- ⊗ **Disease:** Pestilent Self (creatures within reach must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be sickened for 1d6 rounds)
- ⊗ **Intelligence:** Cunning Intellect (+2 to all Knowledge checks), Focus of Evil Intent (1 iliaster/+2 to an Intelligence-based check, requires trance), Lesser Mastermind (+4 intelligence), Rippling Grey Matter (3 iliaster/+1 bonus to Will saves, –1 penalty to enemies' Will saves), Invasive Neurons (6 iliaster/possession)

The surgeons of the abhorei are all members of the massively influential Chirurgeon's Guild; their hospitals offer all sorts of upgrades and transformations as well as installation in new hosts. The chirurgeons's knowledge of fleshworking exceeds even that of the Zethu; their biomechanical servants are considerably more powerful than those of the Unveilers, and the abhorei have more implants and grafts to enhance their host bodies.

When bonded to a warrior of the Bori tribe (10th level mortal, see below)

Bonded Abhorei Surgeon

Medium Mortal/Abhorei Hybrid

Hit Dice: 10d12+30 plus 10d4 (120 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 25 ft. (5 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+3 Dexterity, +5 breastplate, +2 facemask), touch 13, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+11

Attack: Greatsword +12 melee (2d6+3 plus 2d6 holy/19-20)

Full Attack: Greatsword +12/+7 melee (2d6+3 plus 2d6 holy/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +8

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +12, Climb +1, Concentration +13, Craft (fleshworking) +9, Diplomacy +9, Heal +19, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (infernography) +14, Spot +6, Survival +6

Feats: Boost Armour (fire resistance), Boost Weapon (holy), Cleave, Dodge, Power Attack, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Related Knowledge (Heal and Knowledge (arcana)), Simple Weapons Proficiency, Skill Focus (Heal), Weapon Finesse (scalpel), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft, Fast Healing 1/10 Minutes, Crawl
- ⊗ **Disease:** Pestilent Self (creatures within reach must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be sickened for 1d6 rounds)
- ⊗ **Intelligence:** Cunning Intellect (+2 to all Knowledge checks), Focus of Evil Intent (1 iliaster/+2 to an Intelligence-based check, requires trance), Lesser Mastermind (+4 intelligence), Rippling Grey Matter (3 iliaster/+1 bonus to Will saves, –1 penalty to enemies' Will saves), Invasive Neurons (6 iliaster/possession)

Challenge Rating: 15

This surgeon resembles a lump of overgrown brain; it is so large that it cannot be easily grafted to a human host, so it has been sewn to the back and shoulders of the mortal as well as being inserted into the skull. Even then, tendrils of brain-matter push out of the ears and eye sockets and dangle down inside the mouth. Its mortal host is a magnificent, muscle-bound warrior whose brutish limbs are quite at odds with the delicate movements of the abhorei.

Abhorei Guard

(2nd level Abhorei)

Small Abhorei

Hit Dice: 2d4 (5 hp)

Initiative: +1**Speed:** 0 ft.**Armour Class:** 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10**Base Attack/Grapple:** +2/+4**Attack:** –**Full Attack:** –**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Attacks:** –**Special Qualities:** –**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8**Skills:** Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +7, Search +6, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7**Feats:** Martial Weapons Proficiency**Mutations:**⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft⊗ **Filth:** Slimy Skin (+4 Escape Artist and Swim, +2 Touch AC)

A low-ranking guard, such creatures serve greater abhorei in the hopes of being rewarded with better hosts. A skilled and loyal servant might be rewarded with a mortal or demon host, perhaps even an angel. A poor servant would be grafted to a sickly spawn or immobile colony of vermin to teach it a lesson. Physically, the creature looks more like a pool of slime with entrails running through it than a living creature.

When bonded to a black bear**Bonded Abhorei Guard****Medium Animal/Abhorei Hybrid****Hit Dice:** 3d8+6 plus 2d4 (24 hp)**Initiative:** +2**Speed:** 40 ft. (8 squares)**Armour Class:** 23 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +5 breastplate, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 12, flat-footed 21**Base Attack/Grapple:** +2/+7**Attack:** Claw +7 melee (1d4+5)**Full Attack:** Claw +7 melee (1d4+5) and bite +2 melee (1d6+2)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Attacks:** –**Special Qualities:** Darkvision, scent**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +4**Abilities:** Str 21, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 7**Skills:** Climb +3, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +7, Search +6, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7, Swim +13**Feats:** Endurance, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Run**Mutations:**⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft⊗ **Filth:** Slimy Skin (+4 Escape Artist and Swim, +2 Touch AC)**Challenge Rating:** 3

This guard has been bonded to a rarity in the Infernum – a black bear from the mortal realm (obviously, the guard has a wealthy master who can afford such wonders). The resulting hybrid resembles a sickly-looking bear covered in thrashing slime and armour. The bear's paws have been surgically opened and lengthened, giving it opposable thumbs and dextrous fingers. A shield is strapped to the wretch's left arm.

Abhorei Warrior**(7th level Abhorei)****Medium Abhorei****Hit Dice:** 7d4+7 (24 hp)**Initiative:** +0**Speed:** 0 ft.**Armour Class:** 19 (+1 natural, +8 carapace), touch 10, flat-footed 19**Base Attack/Grapple:** +7/+9**Attack:** –**Full Attack:** –**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Attacks:** –**Special Qualities:** –**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +7**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 8**Skills:** Intimidate +9, Knowledge (infernography) +12, Listen +12, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Warcraft +12**Feats:** Martial Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Specialisation (claw)**Mutations:**⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft, Fast Healing 1/hour, Crawl⊗ **Horns:** Horn Growth (+1 AC, +2 Diplomacy)⊗ **Living Armour:** Armoured Carapace (+4 AC), Reinforced Armour (1 iliaster/+1AC for 10 minutes), Improved Carapace (+4 AC)

A warrior of the abhorei, this creature looks like a gigantic coiled insect. Its faceted eyes betray a terrible intelligence and vicious nature. Abhorei warriors of this sort lead the piratical raids and invasions across the Sunless Sea. While their influence in abhorei society is not as great as that of the surgeons, their military might means that the warriors get their pick of hosts.

When bonded to a House Lictat Warrior (9th level fiend, see below)

Bonded Abhorei Warrior

Large Demon/Abhorei Hybrid

Hit Dice: 9d10+9 plus 7d4+7 (82 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Armour Class: 28 (–2 size, +4 Dex, +8 natural, +8 carapace), touch 12, flat-footed 24

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+15

Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+6) or living gun +10 ranged (1d6)

Full Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+6) or living gun +10/+5 ranged (1d6)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +7

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 7

Skills: Intimidate +9, Knowledge (infernography) +12, Listen +12, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Tumble +12, Warcraft +12

Feats: Double Tap, Far Shot, Hover, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Specialisation (claw)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Fiend:** Wings, Hellfire Bomb (three iliaster/hellfire), Improved Flight
- ⊗ **Charisma:** Dangerous Beauty (1 iliaster/+2 to Seduction or Diplomacy)
- ⊗ **Living Weapons:** Weapon Growth (gun, costs 1 hp/shot), Deadly Strike (1 iliaster/+1 hit or +2 to damage), Gore Cannon (1 iliaster/X hit points: increase damage by X), Control Weapon (3 iliaster/retract or enlarge weapon)
- ⊗ **Insect Aspect:** Chitin Armour (+4 AC) (unusable due to hide clash)
- ⊗ **Abhorei:** Graft, Fast Healing 1/hour, Crawl
- ⊗ **Horns:** Horn Growth (+1 AC, +2 Diplomacy)
- ⊗ **Living Armour:** Armoured Carapace (+4 AC), Reinforced Armour (1 iliaster/+1AC for 10 minutes), Improved Carapace (+4 AC)

Iliaster Reserve: 15

Challenge Rating: 11

This abhorei is bonded to a particularly fine fiend. The insect abhorei is mainly attached to the fiend's head, but its armour plates have extended all over the fiend's body. The creature retains its fearsome natural weapons and lethal arm-cannon, although its mastery of hellfire is severely diminished by the abhorei's influence (as Craft (hellfire)) is a Charisma-



based skill, the abhorei cannot access the host's ranks in the skill).

Still, the abhorei's ability to transmute hit points into iliaster means that it can make exceedingly efficient use of the Deadly Strike mutation.

Angels

See *Book of the Damned* for the angelic base state.

Corrupt Angel (15th level Angel)

Medium Angel

Hit Dice: 15d10+60 (162 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Armour Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +6 crawling armour, +4 shields), touch 12, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+15

Attack: Longsword +16 melee (1d8 plus 2d6 fire (when flaming sword is active))/19-20)

Full Attack: Longsword +16/+11/+6 melee and +11 melee (1d8 plus 2d6 fire (when flaming sword is active))/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –**Saves:** Fort +15, Ref +7, Will +12**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 10**Skills:** Concentration +12, Diplomacy +9, Intimidate +5, Seduction +5, Sorcery +10, Spot +13, Torture +10, Tumble +10,**Feats:** Combat Expertise, Extra Skill (Torture), Extra Mutation, Extra Mutation, Extra Mutation, Extra Mutation, Great Fortitude**Corruption:** 18**Angelic Gifts:**✱ **Wings**✱ **Holy Aura** (1 iliaster/minute of Protection, Corruption 15+ characters must make a Will save (DC 17) to come within 10 feet of the Angel)✱ **Aegis** (1 iliaster/+3 AC bonus, max +9)✱ **Flaming Sword** (1 iliaster/flaming weapon for 10 minutes)✱ **Demon's Hunger** (metabolise iliaster)✱ **Improved Iliaster Gain** (no need for Fortitude save for first two drinks/day)✱ **Random Mutation****Mutations** (1 Random Mutation from Path, 3 Random Mutations from Corruption, 4 from Feats):✱ **Myriad Limbs:** Extra Limb x2, Strengthen Limb x2✱ **Man:** Of Mortal Form (shapeshift into mortal form)✱ **Wandering Eyes:** Extra Eye✱ **Darkness:** Demon Eyes (1 iliaster/darkvision)✱ **Bonded Weapon:** Bonded Weapon x2**Iliaster Reserve:** 90**Challenge Rating:** 15**Equipment:** Two angelic longswords, crawling armour, two heavy shields**Rituals Known:** *Binding I, summoning I, warding I, counterspell, scrying**'Good and evil are illusions; faith is belief in that illusion. I have learned to see clearly with my new eyes.'**An example of how far an angel can fall, this horror has grown a third eye in the centre of its chest, as well as two more arms. In combat, it wields a flaming sword and a shield in either pair of arms, making it a deadly fighter.*

The few angels corrupt enough to thrive in the Infernum become things worse than demons. They can sustain themselves on a vast quantity of tainted iliaster, avoiding the starvation and diminishment that awaits most of the fallen. In time, a corrupt angel can become the equal of the legendary First Fallen, who once ruled all of Hell.

Harrower (4th level Angel)**Medium Angel****Hit Dice:** 4d10+8 (50 hp)**Initiative:** +1**Speed:** 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 25 ft. (average)**Armour Class:** 22 (+8 iron plate, +2 helmet, +2 heavy shield), touch 10, flat-footed 22**Base Attack/Grapple:** +4/+9**Attack:** Longsword +9 melee

(1d8+5/19-20)

Full Attack: Longsword +9 melee (1d8+5/19-20)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Special Attacks:** –**Special Qualities:** –**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +5**Abilities:** Str 20, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +9, Heal +8, Listen +8, Spot +8, Warcraft +7

Feats: Cleave, Hover, Power Attack

Corruption: 4

Angelic Gifts:

⊗ **Wings**

⊗ **Holy Aura** (1 iliaster/minute of Protection, Corruption 15+ characters must make a Will save (DC 13) to come within 10 feet of the Angel)

Iliaster Reserve: 21

Challenge Rating: 4

Equipment: Angelic longsword, iron plate, shield, helmet

'This is still my fight. If the Host of Heaven is denied me, then I shall lead a new Host of mortals against evil.'

An angel armoured in shining plate flies above you. Its tabard bears the emblem of the Harrowers.

This angel wears a suit of iron armour forged for it by the warriors of the Harrowing. It still carries the longsword it fell with, but its purpose is now to protect its mortal allies in the war on Hell. Its grim demeanour means that its Holy Aura power is relatively weak, but it makes up for this deficiency with crushing strength.

New-Fallen (1st level Angel)

Medium Angel

Hit Dice: 1d10+1 (6 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)

Armour Class: 14 (+4 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19-20)

Full Attack: Longsword +2 melee (1d8+1/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +3

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Heal +4, Listen +4, Perform +4, Sense Motive +3, Spot +7, Tumble +5, Warcraft +4

Feats: Dodge, Fly-by Attack

Corruption: 1

Angelic Gifts:

⊗ **Wings**

Iliaster Reserve: 60

Challenge Rating: 1

Equipment: Angelic longsword

'... no. This cannot be. The Word would not reject me so. I cannot be... fallen.'

An angel staggers towards you. It is covered in white dust and scorch-marks. Its eyes are confused and fearful for the first time in its existence.

This unfortunate angel has just crashed through the Lethe Clouds and plummeted into the Pit. Naked and unarmed save for a single sword, it is a glowing beacon of purest iliaster, so it will soon be attacked by hordes of hungry demons. It can channel its iliaster into its own shell to heal itself, but when its supplies dwindle, it will die unless it learns how to replenish itself.

Lost Angel (9th level Angel)

Medium Angel

Hit Dice: 9d10+9 (58 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)

Armour Class: 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+8

Attack: Longsword +8 melee (1d8–1/19-20)

Full Attack: Longsword +8 melee (1d8–1/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +12

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 19, Cha 20

Skills: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +17, Heal +16, Listen +18, Sense Motive +12, Spot +18

Feats: Alertness, Extra Skill (Bluff), Iron Will, Iliaster Font, Related Knowledge (Bluff & Sense Motive)

Corruption: 11

Angelic Gifts:

⊗ **Wings**

⊗ **Holy Aura** (1 iliaster/minute of Protection, Corruption 15+ characters must make a Will save (DC 20) to come within 10 feet of the Angel)

⊗ **Aegis** (1 iliaster/+3 AC bonus, max +9)

⊗ **Of Mortal Form** (1 iliaster/become a mortal)

⊗ **Improved Iliaster Gain** (generate iliaster 2/day)

Iliaster Reserve: 60

Challenge Rating: 9

Equipment: Angelic longsword

'This is a sanctuary. The demons will not follow you in here.'

As you watch, the woman's skin begins to glow as if lit from within. Magnificent swan-like wings emerge from her back.

This angel now appears to be a beautiful mortal woman when first encountered. She is on the Path of the Mortal and spends most of her time in that form, building up her iliaster reserve. She is a skilled healer, able to restore even mortally wounded creatures to full health quickly. She prefers to stay out of the wars and intrigues of Hell – as she can only generate iliaster twice a day, she must conserve her power whenever possible.

Animals

The few animals living in the Infernum came in through hellgouts centuries ago. They are ignored by most demons, although the Oblurots do value them as delicacies. Animals are kept as pets by noble demons, although keeping the creatures alive in the unpleasant environment of Hell is difficult.

Animal Base State

- ⊗ d8 Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ total Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Good Fortitude and Reflex saves (certain animals have different good saves).
- ⊗ Skill points equal to (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die.

Traits: An animal possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry):

- ⊗ Intelligence score of 1 or 2 (no creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher can be an animal).
- ⊗ Darkvision.
- ⊗ Proficient with its natural weapons only.
- ⊗ Proficient with no armour unless trained for war.
- ⊗ Animals eat, sleep, and breathe.

Bat

Diminutive Animal

Hit Dice: 1/4 d8 (1 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 5 ft (1 square), fly 40 ft. (good)

Armour Class: 16 (+4 size, +2 Dex), touch 16, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-17

Attack: —

Full Attack: —

Space/Reach: 1 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Blindsight 20 ft., darkvision

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4

Skills: Hide +14, Listen +8*, Move Silently +6, Spot +8*

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 1/10

Flocks of bats are found on the Second Circle, in the caves and valleys of the Tempest Mountains. The creatures are often adopted as pets by House Lictat, whose spies regularly travel abroad in the form or bodies of bats.

Blindsight: A bat notices and locates creatures within 20 feet. Opponents still have 100% concealment against a creature with blindsense.

Skills: *A bat has a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Listen checks. These bonuses are lost if its blindsense is negated.

Black Bear

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6

Attack: Claw +6 melee (1d4+4)

Full Attack: 2 claws +6 melee (1d4+4) and bite +1 melee (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +4, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +8

Feats: Endurance, Run

Challenge Rating: 2

The only bears in the Infernum are in the wilds of the Third Circle and in the Dark Carnival on the Seventh, where they are tortured and made to dance for the entertainment of demons

Skills: A black bear has a +4 racial bonus on Swim checks.

Cat

Tiny Animal

Hit Dice: 1/2 d8 (2 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-12

Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d2-4)

Full Attack: 2 claws +4 melee (1d2-4) and bite -1 melee (1d3-4)

Space/Reach: 2½ ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +6, Hide +14*, Jump +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3

Feats: Weapon Finesse

Challenge Rating: ¼

Cats take to the Infernal environment surprisingly well. The halls of House Riethii are thronged with feral cats, many of which are surprisingly intelligent and corrupt. The stealthy animals make excellent vessels for possession.

Skills: Cats have a +4 racial bonus on Climb, Hide, and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks. Cats have a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks. They use their Dexterity modifier instead of their Strength modifier for Climb and Jump checks.

*In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus rises to +8.

Dog

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8+2 (6 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-3

Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d4+1)

Full Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d4+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Jump +7, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +1*

Feats: Alertness, Track

Challenge Rating: ¼

Dogs generally hunt in packs, chasing and exhausting prey until they can drag it down. Wild dog packs can be found on the Fifth Circle, the descendants of watchdogs and hunting hounds. The Harrowers and the Early tribes both use dogs as sentries, as the scent

of demons can be the only warning a tribe gets before an attack.

Skills: Dogs have a +4 racial bonus on Jump checks.

*Dogs have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

Hawk

Tiny Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)

Armour Class: 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-10

Attack: Talons +5 melee (1d4-2)

Full Attack: Talons +5 melee (1d4-2)

Space/Reach: 2½ ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Darkvision

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +14

Feats: Weapon Finesse

Challenge Rating: ¼

These creatures are similar to eagles but slightly smaller: 1 to 2 feet long, with wingspans of 6 feet or less. They do not survive in the Infernum except as the pets of demons or Harrowers.

Skills: Hawks have a +8 racial bonus on Spot checks.

Horse, Heavy

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+11

Attack: Hoof +6 melee (1d6+4)

Full Attack: 2 hooves +6 melee (1d6+4) and bite +1 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +4

Feats: Endurance, Run

Challenge Rating: 2

These animals are bred by the Knights of the Harrowing, who have the only heavy horses in Hell. These are reserved for the higher-ranking members of the order; lesser knights must make do with spawn. A heavy warhorse can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he or she succeeds on a Ride check.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a heavy warhorse is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A heavy warhorse can drag 4,500 pounds.

Horse, Light

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+9

Attack: Hoof +4 melee (1d4+3)

Full Attack: 2 hooves +4 melee (1d4+3) and bite –1 melee (1d3+1)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4

Feats: Endurance, Run

Challenge Rating: 1

Horses are bred by the Early tribes, where they are seen as a sign of prestige. They are less hardy in Hell than spawn, but are much more pleasant companions. A light horse can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds on a Ride check.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a light horse is up to 230 pounds; a medium load, 231–460 pounds; and a heavy load, 461–690 pounds. A light horse can drag 3,450 pounds.

Lion

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (32 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 15 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12

Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d4+5)

Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+5) and bite +2 melee (1d8+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d4+2

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +7, Hide +3*, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Spot +5

Feats: Alertness, Run

Challenge Rating: 3

Lions are encountered only in the Gardens of the Seventh; House Astyanath has several such creatures in its zoos, where they are pitted against captured mortals in gladiatorial bouts.

Pounce: If a lion charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Improved Grab: To use this ability, a lion must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Rake: Attack bonus +7 melee, damage 1d4+2.

Skills: Lions have a +4 racial bonus on Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks.

*In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +12.

Rat

Tiny Animal

Hit Dice: ¼d8 (1 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.

Armour Class: 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–12

Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d3–4)

Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d3–4)

Space/Reach: 2½ ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +14, Move Silently +10, Swim +10

Feats: Weapon Finesse

Challenge Rating: ¼

The only mortal animal to thrive in the Infernum, rats can be found anywhere, from the streets of Pandemonium to the caves of the Bori on the First Circle. The lack of good meat in Hell means that mortal travellers are often attacked by ravenous rat swarms. Rats are also used in many creative tortures by imaginative demons.

Skills: Rats have a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance, Climb and Swim checks. A rat can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. A rat uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb and Swim checks. A rat has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Viper Snake

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Armour Class: 17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/−6

Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d2−2 plus poison)

Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d2−2 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +11, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +6

Feats: Weapon Finesse

Challenge Rating: ½

Serpents are common in the Infernum; though their ancestors came from the mortal world, the serpents are now as adapted to the hellish environment as any spawn and thrive throughout the Pit.

Poison: A viper snake has a poisonous bite that deals initial and secondary damage of 1d6 Constitution, unless the victim makes a successful Fortitude save (DC 10).

Wolf

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d6+1)

Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d6+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Trip

Special Qualities: Darkvision, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3, Survival +1*

Feats: Track, Weapon Focus (bite)

Challenge Rating: 1

Wolf packs are sometimes encountered on the Fifth; House Sturrach prefers the ferocity of wolves to that of hellhounds. Wild wolves can also be encountered on the Seventh.

Trip: A wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+1 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the wolf.

Skills: *Wolves have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

Benandanti

The benandanti – ‘good walkers’ – come from human stock, but have supernatural powers. A potential benandanti is marked at birth, for they are born with a caul over their faces, signifying that their eyes look upon other realms. Benandanti have the power to travel to Hell in their dreams, where they take on the form of great werewolves and attack the demons. Benandanti can carry souls out of the Pit and infuse them into the mortal realm; these souls become part of the natural world, strengthening it and ensuring good harvests.

Benandanti have an instinctive hatred of demons, making them a powerful opposing force in Hell. They lack organisation, however – while families of benandanti might all come from the same village and project themselves as one pack into the Pit, most are lone wolves, rampaging through isolated estates and stealing souls. Some benandanti have allied with the

Harrowers or Early tribes; turncoat walkers have even bargained with demons for souls.

The benandanti ability to walk between the worlds and project themselves into Hell is dependant on the turning wheel of the seasons and the stars; they can always project themselves at the equinoxes and solstices, but can also ride in on hellgouts, portals and other disturbances in the gulf between the mortal realm and Hell.

Benandanti Base State

- ⊗ Benandanti use the same rules as mortals while in mortal form.

When projecting themselves into Hell, Benandanti apply the following changes:

- ⊗ +6 Strength, +4 Constitution, +4 Dexterity
- ⊗ +6 Natural Armour
- ⊗ DR 10/silver
- ⊗ Benandanti have a natural Claw attack that deals 1d8 points of damage and a secondary bite attack that deals 1d10 points of damage.
- ⊗ Benandanti gain gifts as they advance in level, as follows:

Level	Gift
1	Project: Benandanti can enter Hell in dreams; Dream-Form: Benandanti adopts a wolf-form while in Hell
5	Swallow Souls: A benandanti can now swallow a shredded or willing soul as an attack action. The soul is carried out of Hell if the benandanti leaves by waking.
10	Scent: The benandanti gains the Scent ability, as per the Beast I link.
15	Rage: A benandanti can now spend three iliaster to rage, as per the Hulk I link.
20	Purity: The benandanti now reduces all environmental Sin Ratings by 2 for the purposes of gaining Corruption. The benandanti can now enter Hell once per month.
25	Holy Killer: The benandanti gains the Boost Weapon (holy) for its claws. If it already possesses this feat, the holy damage is increased to 2d8.
30	World Dancer: The benandanti can now enter Hell freely, instead of having to wait for a hellgout or solstice.

- ⊗ A benandanti slain in its dream-form is not automatically slain, but must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 +1 per time the benandanti has died

in its dreams). If this saving throw is failed, the benandanti is reduced to -1 hit points and is dying when it wakes in the mortal world.

- ⊗ A benandanti can leave Hell by waking up. The benandanti must make a Concentration check to wake up, at DC 10 + 2 per Circle of Hell (i.e. a benandanti on the Fifth would have to make a DC 20 check to wake up. Attempting to wake up is a full-round action.
- ⊗ Benandanti gain Corruption as normal, even in dream-form.
- ⊗ Benandanti have a Challenge Rating equal to their level +2.

Lesser Benandanti

(1st level Benandanti)

Medium Mortal (Benandanti)

Progressions: Good Skills and Feats, Average Hit Points and Saving Throws, Poor Base Attack

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+4 Dex, +6 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/+5

Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d8+4) and bite +0 melee (1d10+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13

Skills: Climb +10, Concentration +6, Craft (ironworking) +6, Diplomacy +6, Spot +6, Survival +7

Feats: Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft)

Corruption: 0

Gifts:

- ⊗ **Project**
 - ⊗ **Dream-Form** (DR 10/silver)
- Challenge Rating:** 3

The creature is wolf-like, but does not seem to be a beast. It has human eyes, which look panicked and confused, yet it flexes its razor-sharp claws with a warrior's confidence.

This unfortunate benandanti has no real idea of his heritage and power; as far as he is concerned, Hell is just a bad dream he suffers from four or five times a year. He works as a blacksmith in his Earthly life, far from any other benandanti who might teach him of his supernatural calling.

Ravager

(7th level Benandanti)

Medium Mortal (Benandanti)

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack Bonus, Average Feats and Saving Throws, Poor Skills

Hit Dice: 7d12+21 (66 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+4 Dex, +6 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+13

Attack: Claw +13 melee (1d8+6)

Full Attack: Claw +13/+8 melee (1d8+6) and bite +8 melee (1d10+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 18, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +5, Knowledge (theology) +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +5, Survival +5

Feats: Blind-Fight, Boost Weapon (holy), Cleave, Improved Natural Armour, Power Attack, Track

Corruption: 6

Gifts:

⊗ **Project**

⊗ **Dream-Form** (DR 10/silver)

⊗ **Swallow Souls**

Challenge Rating: 9

You see a feral, wolf-like creature. Its claws glow with a painfully bright and pure light, and it slavers with anticipation when it sees you.

Many benandanti are like this; truly alive only in the solstice dreams, when they ravage Hell and hunt demons. For the rest of the year, the benandanti warrior bides his time, whiling away the dull months until the gates of the underworld open again and he can fulfil his birthright.

Soulthief

(10th level Benandanti)

Medium Mortal (Benandanti)

Progressions: Good Skills and Saving Throws, Average Hit Points and Base Attack Bonus, Poor Feats

Hit Dice: 10d8+30 (75 hp)

Initiative: +8

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+4 Dex, +6 natural), touch 14,

flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+10

Attack: Claw +12 melee (1d8+5)

Full Attack: Claw +12/+7 melee (1d8+5) and Bite +3 melee (1d10+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +11

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +15, Heal +12, Hide +15, Knowledge (infernography) +6, Knowledge (theology) +6, Listen +13, Move Silently +15, Spot +13, Survival +13

Feats: Extra Skill (Concentration), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Run, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Specialisation (claw)

Corruption: 8

Gifts:

⊗ **Project**

⊗ **Dream-Form** (DR 10/silver)

⊗ **Swallow Souls**

⊗ **Scent**

Challenge Rating: 12

The wolf-like creature crouches low to the ground, using the cover to its fullest advantage. It sniffs the air, detecting almost imperceptible changes in the foul ether.

Not all benandanti are ravening monsters. This soulthief is much more concerned with stealing souls from the torture palaces. She has the skills and ability to slip into the Haimon estates like a fox creeping into a hen-house. There, she devours as many souls as she can before fleeing back to the mortal world. She has been in Hell many times, so she has hidden caches of equipment in secret places on the First and Second Circles.

Witch (13th level Benandanti)

Medium Mortal (Benandanti)

Progressions: Good Skills and Saving Throws, Average Feats and Hit Points, Poor Base Attack Bonus

Hit Dice: 13d8+13 (71 hp)

Initiative: +8

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+10

Attack: Claw +10 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Claw +10/+5 melee (1d8+4) and bite +5 melee (1d10+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +12

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 13

Skills: Concentration +17, Diplomacy +17, Listen +18, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (infernography) +18, Knowledge (theology) +18, Sense Motive +16, Sorcery +23, Spot +16, Survival +18

Feats: Extra Skill (Diplomacy), Extra Skill (Knowledge (arcana)), Extra Skill (Sorcery), Illiaster Font, Iron Will, Related Knowledge (Knowledge (arcana) & Sorcery), Skill Focus (Sorcery), Track

Corruption: 12

Gifts:

- ⊗ **Project**
- ⊗ **Dream-Form** (DR 10/Silver)
- ⊗ **Swallow Souls**
- ⊗ **Scent**

Challenge Rating: 16

Rituals Known: *Binding I, II, summoning I, III, warding I, IV, discern magic, greater ritual preparation, psychic defence, purification rite, reveal the true form, ritual preparation, scrying*

The creature resembles a humanoid wolf, but carries the tools and instruments of a sorcerer in her clawed hands.

Elder benandanti study the art of sorcery. One of the chief purposes of this magic is to learn the *purification rite* to remove corruption from younger walkers. Once that rite is known, then sorcery can be turned to other ends, such as watching events in Hell through *scrying*.

Biomechanoids

Biomechanoids combine the mechanical structure and capabilities of constructs with the independent sentience and versatility of organic life forms. They are a hybrid of living creature and machine, magically fused into one atrocity. While the vast majority of biomechanoids are controlled by House Zethu, who holds the harvesting grounds on the Sixth, a few have been purchased or captured by rival powers.

Biomechanoids are made for a purpose and do not deviate from it. They are, in essence, mechanically enhanced slaves. Since a biomechanoid is very much better at maintaining itself than a blind, unthinking machine would be, they are prized by the Infernum as reliable and efficient devices. Biomechanoids serve in many different ways, acting as vehicles, tools, siege engines, symbiotic weapons and heavy machines.

Biomechanical Base State

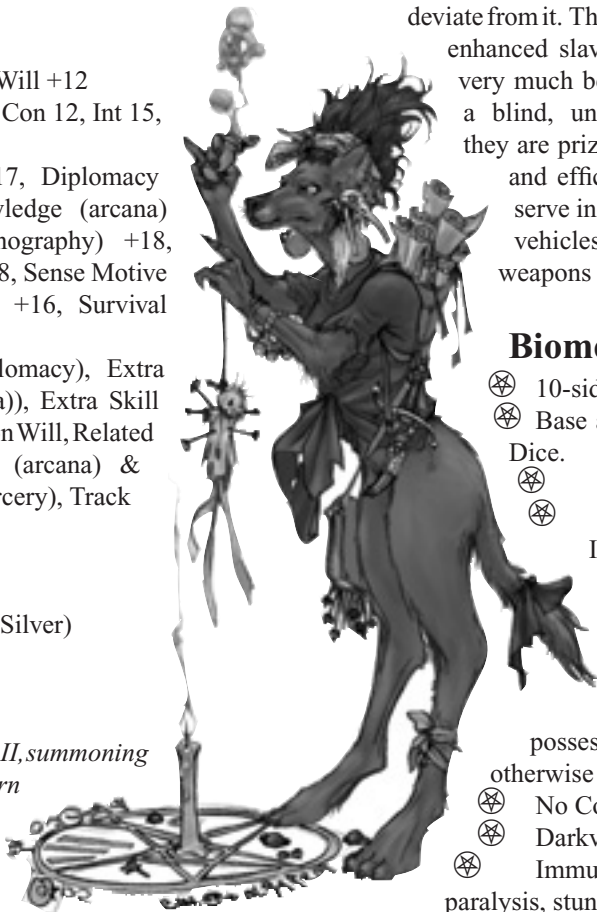
- ⊗ 10-sided Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to total Hit Dice.
- ⊗ No good saving throws.
- ⊗ Skill points equal to (2 + Intelligence modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die.

Traits: A biomechanoid possesses the following traits, unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry:

- ⊗ No Constitution score.
- ⊗ Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- ⊗ Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects.
- ⊗ Immunity to any effect that requires a Fortitude saving throw unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless.
- ⊗ Not at risk of death from massive damage. Immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less.
- ⊗ Because its body is mostly composed of unliving matter, a biomechanoid is difficult to destroy. It gains bonus hit points based on size, as shown on the following table.

Size	Bonus Hit Points	Size	Bonus Hit Points
Fine	—	Large	15
Diminutive	—	Huge	20
Tiny	—	Gargantuan	30
Small	5	Colossal	40
Medium	10		

- ⊗ Proficient with its natural weapons only, unless generally humanoid in form, in which case proficient with any weapon mentioned in its entry. Some biomechanoids have no natural weapons.
- ⊗ Proficient with no armour.
- ⊗ Biomechanoids need Strain or Agony to stay alive,



to nourish their organic parts. A biomechanoid that is not fed with fuel becomes inert and inactive. After 24 hours without fuel, it begins to suffer the effects of starvation. Biomechanoids do not need to sleep.

The following subtypes and special abilities apply to biomechanoids.

Vehicle Subtype: Biomechanoids of this type are created to serve as mounts and transports. They can always carry at least one other creature.

Wheeled Subtype: Wheeled biomechanoids benefit from a racial bonus to their Speed of +20 feet. As their wheels limit their freedom of movement, they usually have a restriction on how far they can turn with a given move.

Industrial Subtype: These biomechanoids are used to perform heavy tasks such as mining, drilling and lifting. They typically have high Strength and low Dexterity. It is rare for them to have more than one attack mode. They are not given combat-oriented feats. Industrial biomechanoids are of at least Large size.

Combat Subtype: This artificial monsters are similar to their Industrial kin, but have combat feats and multiple attack modes. They can be of any size, but their considerably greater cost means that most are Medium or Large at most. They are intelligent within the limits of their programming, but lack true intelligence and must be commanded by living leaders in battle.

Tool/Weapon Subtype: These biomechanoids are never of greater than Small size. They are created in order to be used as portable equipment. A creature can attack with one of these biomechanoids as if it were a weapon. When this is done, the biomechanoid adds ½ its Strength ability score modifier to the attack and damage rolls.

While another creature is wielding a biomechanical creature of this kind, it must be attacked with a Sunder attempt instead of being struck as normal. They can also be struck out of the wielder's hands with a disarm attempt, though they actively attempt to avoid this. In either case, the biomechanoid may add its Dexterity ability score modifier to the wielding creature's roll, to avoid being disarmed or sundered. Biomechanical creatures cannot make attacks of their own while they are being wielded.

Static Subtype: Static biomechanoids have no Speed and cannot move around. They can never take such

feats as Run or Spring Attack. They benefit from a +8 racial bonus when rolling to resist attempts to knock them down. Static biomechanoids are usually placed where a simple job needs to be done over and over again; a typical example would be a crane or a torture machine.

Blood Subsistence: The biomechanoid can fuel itself by drawing blood from its host and needs no other sustenance. This ability is very common among tool/weapon biomechanoids, which are fastened to the user's flesh, drive their feeding needles into the user's body and remain there indefinitely. A biomechanoid with this ability deals 1d4 damage to its host per day but never needs to be given any other fuel. This ability always ignores damage resistance. Fitting a biomechanical tool or weapon with this ability to yourself is a full-round action. The tool or weapon will not function for you until it has fastened its feeding proboscis in your body.

Ripsaw

Tiny Biomechanoid Tool

Hit Dice: 2d10 (11 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 5 ft. (1 square)

Armour Class: 16 (+2 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flatfooted 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/–2

Attack: Saw blade +8 melee (1d10+4)

Full Attack: Saw blade +8 melee (1d10+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Ignore hardness

Special Qualities: Biomechanoid traits, blood subsistence

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con –, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Spot +5

Feats: Improved Sunder

Challenge Rating: 1

The demon wields an ugly device resembling a swordfish carved out of black resin and slime.

This biomechanoid resembles the severed head of a swordfish, with little blank eyes and a long blade-like device jutting from its face, with vibrating teeth around the edge. From the creature's rear extend little lashing tentacles with rigid needle tips. When it is not affixed to a host creature, it uses these tentacles to crawl along; when it is conjoined, it uses them to feed from the host's body.

Ignore Hardness: Ripsaws are violently abrasive, shearing through materials softer than metal or stone.

When wielded against an object, the rip saw ignores all Hardness ratings of 5 or less and treats Hardness ratings of 6 or more as if they were one level lower than they actually are.

Improved Sunder: The rip saw transfers the benefits of this feat to the wielder.

Helicycle

Medium Biomechanoid Vehicle

Hit Dice: 8d10+10 (54 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares)

Armour Class: 21 (+1 Dex, +10 natural), touch 11, flatfooted 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+15

Attack: Slam +15 melee (1d4+10)

Full Attack: Slam +15 melee (1d4+10)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Powerful charge

Special Qualities: Biomechanoid traits, DR 5/–

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 12, Con –, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Balance +12, Jump +18

Feats: Endurance, Run, Improved Overrun

Challenge Rating: 6

The demon rides on a creature that looks like bone and chitin twisted into the form of a motorcycle.

A helicycle is an Agony-fuelled biomechanoid that could only have come from the most freakishly foul of Hell's pits. It is a tangle of metal and organic matter that is clearly alive in some ghastly fashion; it emits a horrible purring noise when stationary and roars like a jungle cat when spurred to speed. Helicycles are very popular among the tribes of demons who dwell on the plains of the Infernum and many of them base their whole lives around helicycle culture.

The helicycle rests on two great wheels the size of round shields, which are rimmed with rubbery material like the sliced-off lips of a giant. The whole object gives off a stench that mingles machine oil and burning flesh. Above the front wheel is a single, malevolent, slit-pupilled eyeball, which glows with light, giving off equivalent illumination to a lantern. The biomechanoid has spongy, leathery pads on its back that allow a maximum of two creatures to ride upon it. A typical combination for demons is to have the rider at the front armed with a lance, while the demon sat behind it makes ranged attacks.

A helicycle consumes three units of Strain per eight hours of operation and its fuel tank can hold up to 48

units.

Powerful Charge: A helicycle deals 2d4+14 points of damage when it makes a charge.

Helicycle Movement: A helicycle can move independently or allow itself to be ridden by a creature. When a creature uses a helicycle as its mount, the two of them move on the creature's initiative count. The normal rules of vehicle combat apply.

Biomechanoid Gun

Tiny Biomechanoid Tool

Hit Dice: 3d10 (16 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 5 ft. (1 square)

Armour Class: 18 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/–5

Attack: Boneshot +8 ranged (1d10)

Full Attack: Boneshot +8 ranged (1d10)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Armour penetrating, double tap

Special Qualities: Biomechanoid traits, blood subsistence

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con –, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Spot +7

Feats: Double Tap

Challenge Rating: 1

This little weapon resembles a legless foetus with a sphincter-like mouth. Spikes of bone grow from its exposed spine, while two arms and a coil of bone coming from its chin make a handle and trigger.

A nasty little biomechanical weapon, this gun spits bullets made of bone at its targets. When in use, it wraps itself around the user's forearm and can be fired even by a creature that lacks hands. An organ at the rear of the gun grows new bone-spikes, drawing its sustenance from the user by digging tendrils into his flesh.

Armour Penetrating: The bone shots from the gun are especially good at punching through armour; ignore the first three points of armour bonus to AC possessed by a target. For example, a character wearing spawnleather (+2 AC) with no other modifiers to Armour Class would have AC 10 against an attack from the biomechanical gun.

Double Tap: The biomechanoid transfers the benefits of this feat to its wielder.

Biomechanoid Warrior

Large Biomechanoid Fighter

Hit Dice: 9d10+15 (64 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 21 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 11, flatfooted 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+21

Attack: Claw +16 melee (1d8+12)

Full Attack: Claw +16/+11 (1d8+12)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Unstoppable assault

Special Qualities: Biomechanoid traits, confused

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 14, Con –, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 7

You see a hulking creature with long ropy arms and squat legs loping towards you. It has a massive hunchback of pig-iron and black chitin, but you can see no sign of a head or sensory organs.

The biomechanoid warriors turned the tide during the war against House Sturrach. In retrospect, their success is quite surprising; a mechanoid may be incredibly strong and heavily armoured, but it lacks the intelligence, guile and supernatural abilities of a demon. The chief advantages of the biomechanoids were, in order, not requiring a constant supply of iliaster, their ability to fight consistently (in contrast to the engage-kill-retreat-refuel-attack pattern of most demon warriors) and most importantly of all, the fact that a whole army of biomechanoids could be grown swiftly in a harvesting ground. Vast hordes of warriors were cloned and marched into the field.

Today, the tactics for dealing with biomechanoids are well known; they lack initiative and any understanding of Warcraft, so assassins are used to kill the Zethu leaders, throwing the warriors into disarray. A single biomechanoid is still a significant threat to a demon though, as its massive iron claws and hydraulic muscles are quite capable of tearing a foe in two.

A biomechanical warrior consumes one unit of Strain per eight hours when moving normally, or five units per hour if it engages in battle.

Unstoppable Assault: Biomechanoids warriors keep fighting no matter what. Once a biomechanoid warrior has made a successful attack on a target, it

keeps attacking that target as best it can until ordered to stop by a commander. The biomechanoid warrior is immune to psychic and mind-affecting effects, intimidation, illusions and any other non-physical method that would impede its progress towards the target. The biomechanoid becomes immune to effects that would stun or otherwise penalise its attacks, as well as death by massive damage.

The biomechanoid can also fight until dismembered at –10 hit points.

Confused: If a biomechanoid warrior is not in an unstoppable assault and is not in contact with a creature it identifies as its commander, it becomes confused (see Conditions, page 160 in *Book of the Damned*).

Biomechanoid Scout

Small Biomechanoid Scout

Hit Dice: 2d10 (11 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

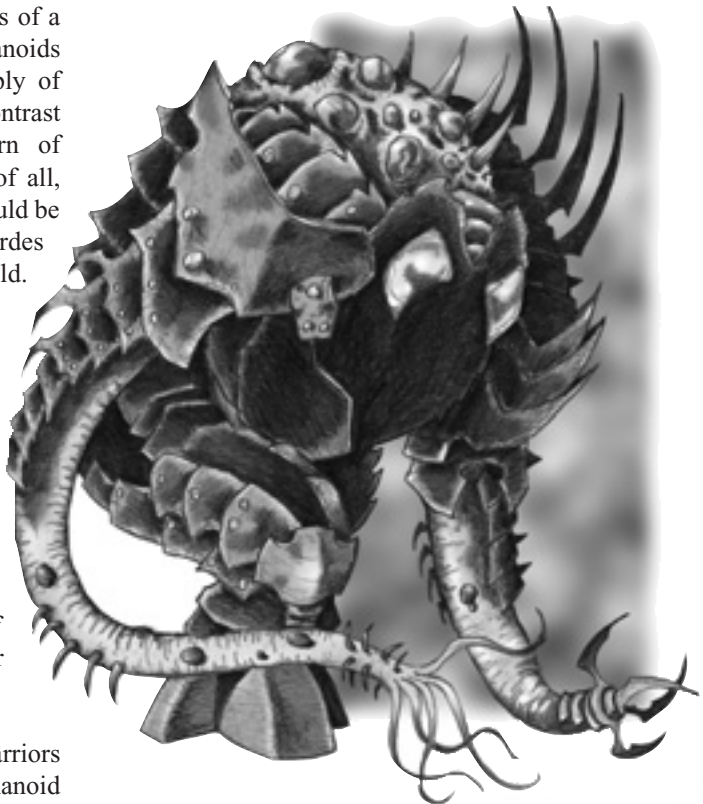
Armour Class: 18 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 14, flatfooted 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/–4

Attack: Claw +1 melee (1d4–2)

Full Attack: Claw +1 (1d4–2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.



Special Attacks: Skitterjump, enhanced senses
Special Qualities: Biomechanoid traits
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 6, Dex 16, Con –, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 4
Skills: Hide +7, Jump +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +2, Spot +6
Feats: Run
Challenge Rating: ½

The creature resembles a tangle of spider legs and eyes without any discernible central mass.

The scouts run in advance of the biomechanoid armies, gathering information before returning to their Zethu masters. The creatures lack the intelligence to actually understand anything they have seen, so they dump their accumulated information into brazen heads that summarise the data for their warlords. The scouts are largely incapable of combat; their only defensive weapon is a small mouth normally used for ingesting Strain. They are designed to be exceedingly quick and agile instead, preferring to run instead of fight.

A scout needs one unit of Strain each day.

Skitterjump: A biomechanoid scout can activate its skitterjump ability once per day as an attack action. For the next 2d4 rounds, its movement doubles, it gains a +10 racial bonus to all Jump checks and it gains the benefits of the evasion ability (if it makes a successful Reflex save against an area effect attack, it takes no damage).

Skills: Biomechanoid scouts have a +4 racial bonus to Jump, Listen, Move Silently and Spot checks. Furthermore, they use their Dexterity bonus instead of their Strength bonus on Jump checks.

Gauntflyer

Huge Biomechanoid Vehicle

Hit Dice: 4d10+20 (42 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 80 ft. (average)

Armour Class: 15 (–2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flatfooted 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+15

Attack: None

Full Attack: None

Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Claws

Special Qualities: Biomechanoid traits, DR 5/–

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con –, Int 0, Wis 12, Cha 4

Skills: Jump +7, Tumble +6

Feats: Fly-by Attack, Hover
Challenge Rating: 2

You see a creature resembling a cross between a pterodactyl and an insect, with certain elements of ragged crow and lizard in the mix. Wires and cables lead from the back of its bald skull to a saddle grown between the wings on its back.

One of the more popular biomechanoids, gauntflyers are swift and agile mounts. The original form of gauntflyer was a living creature, similar to the hellicycles, but the breed was too contrary and vicious to serve in combat. Instead of abandoning the project, the Zethu simply lobotomised the creatures, replacing their brains with a simple set of electrical and necromantic terminals allowing the rider to fly the beast like an aircraft.

A gauntflyer can normally seat four Medium creatures – one pilot and three passengers. Alternatively, a single Large creature can pilot the beast. The landing claws of the gauntflyer are serrated and reinforced with steel, and can be extended to slash at foes beneath the creature. The gauntflyer also makes a remarkably stable firing platform, although the monsters are too weak to carry heavy artillery into the air.

A gauntflyer consumes four Strain per day of operation.

Claws: A creature piloting the gauntflyer may use its claws using his own base attack bonus; the claws add the gauntflyer's Strength bonus of +3 to the attack (as well as its size modifier of –2, for a net +1 to the attack) and deal 1d8+4 points of damage.

Fly-by Attack: The gauntflyer transfers the benefits of this feat to its rider.

Brokenlanders

Beyond Hell, beyond Creation entirely, there lies the continuum of the brokenlanders. They are referred to as the Quillipoth in some texts, the discarded shells of a previous universe. They accept whatever titles or epithets others hurl at them, for the brokenlanders have so little identity of their own. Their cosmos is equally exhausted; only a single star burns there, all the rest have guttered out long ago. There is so little workable matter left to them that a brokenlander looks like a sketch in glass and spider webs. There is no more than a thimbleful of mass in a human-sized brokenlander, and they are equally efficient in terms of power – the equivalent of a single draught

of iliaster could sustain even a powerful brokenlander for aeons.

In comparison to their orphaned universe, the current active Creation has an infinite, inexhaustible wealth of everything – matter, energy, life, emotion, creativity. In their quiet, hollow way, the brokenlanders desperately hunger for this bounty, but the amount of energy needed to travel between their universe and the next is so great that they can only transit across on rare occasions. Hell is by far the easiest for them to reach, but they have been known to travel briefly even to the mortal realm.

Travel beyond their cosmos is exceedingly dangerous for the brokenlanders; their efficiency comes at a price, rendering them vulnerable to even simple dangers. A brokenlander's body might be unbreakable by conventional means, but the magnetic flux of an iron nail might collapse the delicate energy channels within it.

Lower-ranking brokenlanders are similar to biomechanical creatures, in that they were created to be living machines designed for a specific purpose. More powerful brokenlanders are truly alive, although they are wholly integrated with machines and technomagic wonders trillions of years beyond the comprehension of any beings living in the active cosmos.

The coming of the exiled angels was an event of unparalleled wonder to the brokenlanders. The nobles of the brokenlanders gave the angels a vast horde of servants for their war on Hell.

Brokenlander Base State

- ⊗ 6-sided Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ Hit Dice
- ⊗ Good Reflex and Will saving throws.
- ⊗ Skill points equal to (6 + Intelligence modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die.

Traits: A brokenlander possesses the following traits, unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry:

- ⊗ Darkvision.
- ⊗ Proficient with all simple and martial weapons.
- ⊗ Brokenlanders all have DR 5/iron at the very least, as the creatures are physically very tough.
- ⊗ Immune to death from massive damage.
- ⊗ Brokenlanders all have a +4 racial bonus to Disguise, Jump, Move Silently and Perform

checks.

Sef

Medium Brokenlander

Hit Dice: 1d6 (3 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flatfooted 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/+2

Attack: Slam +2 melee (1d4+2)

Full Attack: Slam +2 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: DR 5/iron, toil

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +6, Craft (engineering) +5, Disguise +2, Hide +6, Jump +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Perform +2, Spot +3

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft (engineering))

Challenge Rating: $\frac{1}{2}$

The creature is roughly human in shape and size, but appears to be nothing but a few strands of silvery wire inside a glassy shape. Its hands appear bizarrely complex, containing tiny retracted tools of unknown purpose.

Brokenlander serfs are almost never seen outside the Broken cosmos. There, they work to maintain the ringworld surrounding their last sun. Much of their work is simple conservation; even dust motes are valuable to the penurious survivors of the deserted cosmos. Sometimes, serfs accompany larger brokenlander forces into Hell, but are only employed in combat in desperate circumstances.

Toil: Serfs are immune to exhaustion and fatigue.

Serfs have a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks.

Soldier

Medium Brokenlander

Hit Dice: 4d6+4 (18 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 feet (8 squares)

Armour Class: 23 (+1 Dex, +12 natural), touch 11, flatfooted 2

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+7

Attack: Blade +7 melee (1d8+4) or whip +7 melee (1d2+4)

Full Attack: Blade +7 melee (1d8+4) or whip +7 melee (1d2+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. with whip)

Special Attacks: Ignore armour, group tactics

Special Qualities: DR 10/iron, cold, fire and acid resistance 10

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +11, Disguise +5, Hide +8, Jump +12, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Perform +3, Spot +6, Warcraft +11

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 3

The creature moves with an eerie inhuman grace. It lopes along in a hunched posture, holding a whip in one hand and a jagged blade in the other. It has a long translucent tail that lashes from side to side as it runs, but otherwise has the general proportions of a human.

Soldiers are the leading edge of any brokenlander assault. The creatures contain a vast amount of knowledge about military tactics and strategies, although the majority of these apply to situations that have not existed in the Broken cosmos for millions of years and will not be developed in the living cosmos for millions more. Still, even the remaining usable tactics they possess make them skilled opponents.

The soldiers can communicate telepathically and operate in teams of a half-dozen or so. They endeavour to flank and surround enemies, entangling them with fibre-whips before going in for the kill with blades. Their weapons are so sharp they can penetrate armour with ease.

Ignore Armour: Attacks from brokenlander soldiers bypass armour, shield and helmet bonuses to Armour Class.

Group Tactics: Brokenlanders automatically succeed at Aid Other attempts and gain a +4 synergy bonus from such attempts. They also have a +4 attack bonus from flanking. When attacking into a combat that involves other brokenlander soldiers, they automatically gain the benefits of the Precise Shot feat.

Soldiers have a +4 racial bonus to Warcraft checks.

Sciage

Medium Brokenlander

Hit Dice: 10d6+30 (65 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 28 (+2 Dex, +16 natural), touch 12, flatfooted 26

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+9

Attack: Forcebeam +9 melee (1d10) or forcebeam +9 ranged (1d10)

Full Attack: Forcebeam +9/+4 melee (1d10) or forcebeam +9/+4 ranged (1d10)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Forcebeam, iliaster manipulation

Special Qualities: DR 15/—, energy vulnerability, cold resistance 10, acid resistance 10, sonic resistance 10, sorcery mastery

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +9

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +16, Disguise +5, Diplomacy +16, Jump +10, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +15, Move Silently +19, Perform +5, Sense Motive +15, Spot +15, Sorcery +17, Tumble +15

Feats: Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Disarm

Challenge Rating: 8

Rituals Known: *Binding I, II, IV, summoning I, II, IV, warding I, II, IV, casting of bones, counterspell, discern magic, hanging spell, irresistible current of will, prognostication, psychic defence, reinforce spell, scrying*

This creature resembles a hooded and cloaked figure, although you can see no features in the shadow of its robes and its hands are translucent crystal. It moves on six spider-like legs that grow from its chest and back.

Sciages are the form of brokenlander most commonly encountered in the courts and cities of the Infernum; the creatures are diplomats and emissaries. There is little contact between the Pit and the Broken cosmos, and most of that contact comes in the form of wars. Still, the sciages visit the cities, skittering through the twilight ballrooms and council chambers of Pandemonium and whispering strange, enigmatic threats to the proud hellkin.

The sciages are permitted to remain partly because they respect the demonic order, even the rule of Covenants, and partly out of fear of their powers. Sciages have no iliaster of their own, but can command and shape the iliaster of others. A demon who attacks a sciage might be killed by its own life energy burning out from the inside or bound by a spell fuelled by from its own reserve. The sciages have an encyclopaedic knowledge of sorcery, but it is the sorcery of their own cosmos and many of the rules

of reality have changed in the new Creation. Still, the remainder of their wisdom is such that faustians and demon sorcerers crowd around the sciages, hoping to glean some lore from their shadowed, inhuman lips.

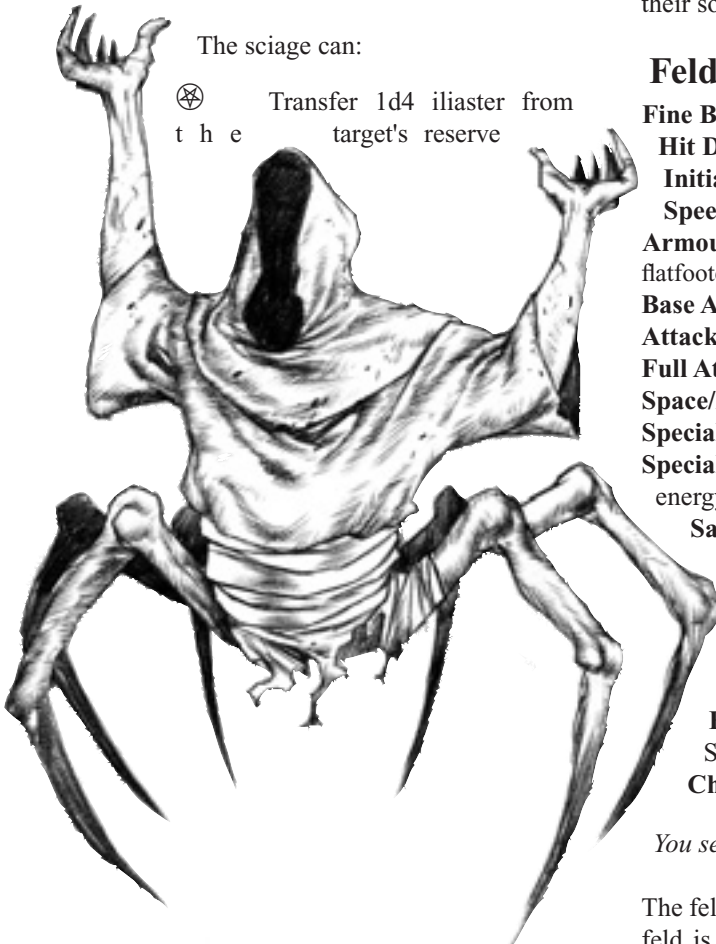
In combat and war, sciages wield their bizarre forcebeam weapons in self-defence, but use sorcery as their primary weapon – *irresistible currents of will* guided by tokens stolen by felds are the customary herald for a brokenlander incursion.

Forcebeam: A sciage can project a beam of light from either hand at will. This beam appears no different from the light of a torch or lantern, but the sciage can make it solid for an instant. This means the beam can be used as a bludgeoning weapon, even at range. The forcebeam has an effective range of sight and cannot be disarmed or sundered.

Iliaster Manipulation: The most infamous ability of a sciage is to control iliaster flow in others. Using this ability is a swift action for the sciage. It is a psychic effect that can target any demon or angel (or mortal with an active iliaster reserve) within sight of the sciage (this includes creatures that the sciage is viewing through *scrying*).

The sciage can:

- ⊗ Transfer 1d4 iliaster from the target's reserve



to its own (a sciage cannot store iliaster as it has no reserve, so it loses one iliaster per round). The target may make a Fortitude save (DC 18) to resist.

- ⊗ Transmute 1d4 iliaster in the target's reserve into damage; the target loses 1d4 iliaster and takes 1d6 points of damage per point of iliaster lost. The target may make a Fortitude save (DC 18) to resist.
- ⊗ Drain 2d4 iliaster from a vessel or device. This does not allow a Fortitude save, even if the vessel or device is held by a creature. If the device contains a tincture like Agony or Strain, then this can also be drained – each point of the tincture becomes one point of iliaster to the sciage.
- ⊗ Cause the iliaster in a weapon or device to explode. This reduces the device's iliaster store by 2d4 and inflicts 1d6 points of damage (ignoring hardness) for every point of iliaster drained.

Energy Vulnerability: A sciage hit by a fire or electrical attack must make a Will save at a DC equal to the damage inflicted or lose its Damage Reduction and Iliaster Manipulation abilities for 1d4 rounds.

Sorcery Mastery: Sciages know far more spells than their sorcery ranks would indicate.

Feld

Fine Brokenlander Swarm

Hit Dice: 6d6 (21 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: Fly 40 ft. (8 squares) (perfect)

Armour Class: 17 (+4 size, +3 Dex), touch 17, flatfooted 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/-17

Attack: Swarm 2d6

Full Attack: Swarm 2d6

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Iliaster drain, illusions, distract

Special Qualities: Swarm traits, fast healing 10, energy vulnerability

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 7, Cha 14

Skills: Bluff +8, Disguise +6, Hide +25, Listen +6, Move Silently +13, Perform +15, Spot +6

Feats: Dodge, Related Knowledge (Listen and Spot), Skill Focus (Perform)

Challenge Rating: 5

You see a swirling cloud of sparkling lights.

The feld are the smallest form of brokenlander – each feld is a minuscule mote of light, which laugh and

cry like children. The laughter of the feld is the only laughter left in their entire cosmos, and it is shrill and empty.

In the Broken cosmos, the feld are entertainers and conjurers, making whatever tools and devices their masters need – and there are few enough of these, in a realm where everything necessary was made aeons ago and there are no fresh thoughts or ideas or stories. The coming of the angels opened up new fields of thought and creation to the feld. The swarms are swift-healing and can endure much; they are capable of conjuring more of themselves. While the brokenlanders can only rarely open portals to the living Creation big enough to send angels or broken legions through, sending a single mote of feld through is relatively easy.

When in Hell, the feld quickly become intolerable nuisances. The creatures share with the sciages the ability to manipulate iliaster in others, but while the sciage can control flows almost at will, the feld are limited to sapping existing iliaster expenditures slightly – when a creature spends iliaster near a feld, the feld increase the cost and take the extra for themselves. They are scavengers for entertainment and ideas too, provoking creatures into action so the feld can observe and copy them. They are inveterate pranksters and tricksters.

Feld swarms have been encountered throughout Hell, although they are most common in the Lower Circles.

Iliaster Drain: If iliaster is spent within 100 feet of a feld swarm, the amount of iliaster spent is increased by 1d3. If this added cost means the iliaster cost exceeds the creature's available reserve, the creature can choose not to activate the ability.

Illusions: A feld swarm can create an illusion at will. This illusion incorporates visual, auditory and tactile elements, although it is not truly real. The illusion has a maximum size of 50 ft. by 50 ft. by 50 ft. The feld must make a Perform check to create the illusion; the result of this Perform check is used whenever characters interact with the illusion. For example, a Spot check is used to notice inconsistencies in the illusion, a Knowledge (law) check if the illusion includes a legal text and so on.

If a character interacts with a damaging illusion, he must make a Will save against the Perform check DC; if the save is failed, then he takes illusory damage (which works like normal damage, but vanishes

when the illusion ends; a character 'killed' by illusory damage falls unconscious). The feld swarm cannot attack directly with an illusion; a swarm could create the image of a rockslide, but only to drive creatures back or to block their progress; it could not create an illusory rock fall directly above a group of characters.

Distract: A creature that starts its turn inside the feld swarm must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) or be nauseated for one round.

Energy Vulnerability: A feld swarm hit by a fire or electrical attack must make a Will save at a DC equal to the damage inflicted or lose its Fast Healing and Illusion abilities for 1d4 rounds.

Allier

Medium Brokenlander

Hit Dice: 20d6+80 (150 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 60 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 24 (+3 Dex, +11 natural), touch 13, flatfooted 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+18

Attack: Longsword +18 melee (2d6+3/19-20)

Full Attack: Longsword +18/+13/+8 (2d6+3/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Variable corporeality, ignore armour, iliaster drain

Special Qualities: DR 20/–, energy vulnerability, cold resistance 10, acid resistance 10, sonic resistance 10

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +15, Will +17

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 16

Skills: Balance +20, Bluff +23, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +19, Gather Information +18, Hide +18, Intimidate +17, Jump +19, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +17, Listen +20, Move Silently +17, Perform +17, Seduction +25, Sense Motive +20, Sleight of Hand +15, Spot +20, Tumble +20, Warcraft +20

Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Challenge Rating: 20

The figure looks like a sculpted, beautiful human. Its skin is pale as alabaster and it is dressed in shimmering robes of crystal and what appears to be ice.

The allier caste is believed to be the rulers of the brokenlanders – or at least the most comprehensible

and material expression of the rulers, as the brokenlanders themselves exist as lattices of energy within their machines. Leaving such semantic hair-splitting aside, the allier are most commonly encountered as warlords or assassins within the brokenlander ranks, although they also visit their sciage emissaries on occasion. The creatures appear to be a refined, beautified version of mortals, almost like wingless angels (leading some sages to speculate that the allier copied their appearance from the fallen angels who escaped the revolt in Hell).

Allier certainly have great control over their physical form. They can become incorporeal at will and can even shift parts of their bodies into an incorporeal state while leaving others material. This tactic is used in combat – the terribly sharp swords of the allier ignore armour, because the blade is incorporeal as it passes through the victim's defences.

The allier are arrogant and callous, but have a twisted sense of honour and nobility that they copied from the angels. They delight in one-on-one duels and contests, where they can use their agility and grace to best effect.

Variable Corporeality: An allier can become incorporeal at will as a swift action. It may also become corporeal as a swift action. It may only attack with its sword while corporeal. However, while remaining corporeal, it can fade parts of its body out to avoid attacks; any attack made on an allier has a 50% miss chance.

Ignore Armour: The sword of an allier ignores armour, shield and helmet bonuses.

Iliaster Drain: By touching an opponent, an allier drains 1d6 points of iliaster from the victim.

Energy Vulnerability: An allier hit by a fire or electrical attack must make a Will save at a DC equal to the damage inflicted or lose its Variable Corporeality and Ignore Armour abilities for 1d4 rounds. The allier can still be struck by energy attacks when incorporeal; it will not take damage from the attack, but must still make a Will save as the detonation disrupts its own internal energy flow.

Constructs

Just like the mortal world, the Infernum had its industrial revolution where steam and electricity were harnessed to operate mighty engines and power great works of science. In Hell, these works were chiefly concerned with factories to produce materials for war and with torture devices to provide yet more iliaster

for the growing demon hordes.

One wonder created during this age of industry was the artificial form of life called the construct. Iliaster is the essence of life and will; it is the ultimate creative, generative spark. In the form of angels, it expresses will and purpose at their purest. In the mortal soul, it is distilled into dreams and hopes and the indomitable spirit of humanity. Iliaster flashes like spiritual quicksilver even when forced into the ghastly shackle-veins of the demon husk.

It was easy, then, for the engineers and sorcerers to create cages of iron and copper for iliaster, to channel distillations of Strain and hellbroths into pipes and valves to create machines that could move like demons, think like demons, even hate like demons. Building constructs still requires great effort however, and they have been outmoded in the eyes of many since the creation of the biomechanicals.

Construct Base State

A construct is an animated object or artificially constructed creature.

- ⊗ 10-sided Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ total Hit Dice.
- ⊗ No good saving throws.
- ⊗ Skill points equal to $(2 + \text{Int modifier, minimum } 1)$ per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die, if the construct has an Intelligence score. However, most constructs are mindless and gain no skill points or feats.

Traits: A construct possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry):

- ⊗ No Constitution score.
- ⊗ Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- ⊗ Immunity to all mind-affecting and psychic effects.
- ⊗ Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease.
- ⊗ Cannot heal damage on their own, but can be repaired using the Craft skill.
- ⊗ Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue or exhaustion.
- ⊗ Immunity to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless).
- ⊗ Not at risk of death from massive damage. Immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less.
- ⊗ Because its body is a mass of unliving matter, a construct is hard to destroy. It gains bonus hit

points based on size, as shown on the following table.

Size	Bonus Hit Points	Size	Bonus Hit Points
Fine	—	Large	30
Diminutive	—	Huge	40
Tiny	—	Gargantuan	60
Small	10	Colossal	80
Medium	20		

- ⊗ Proficient with its natural weapons only, unless generally humanoid in form, in which case proficient with any weapon mentioned in its entry.
- ⊗ Constructs do not eat, sleep or breathe.

Brazen Head

Tiny Construct

Hit Dice: 1d10 (5 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 0 ft.

Armour Class: 14 (+2 size, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/−12

Attack: Bite −2 melee (1d4−4)

Full Attack: Bite −2 melee (1d4−4)

Space/Reach: 2½ ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: —

Special Qualities: Computation, construct traits

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3

Abilities: Str 3, Dex 10, Con −, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 13

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (infernography) +7, Knowledge (law) +7, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +7, Knowledge (theology) +7

Feats: Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana))

Challenge Rating: ¼

The device resembles a human head, made out of brass and cogs. Its eyes open, focusing lenses of glass upon you. Its mouth opens also, whirring and clicking before a silver tongue and lips of metal begin to speak...

The brazen heads are the hellish equivalent of computers and calculators; these mechanical minds are repositories of wisdom and knowledge. They are produced in the machine realm of Cacaphractus, but are traded by the Zethu throughout the Infernum. A brazen head is of great help to a demon Lord running an estate or to an apprentice sorcerer studying the secrets of magic. The heads remember everything they are told and learn quickly, although they have no

Sorcerous Heads

Some brazen heads know sorcery. While the heads have no iliaster reserve nor limbs, and so cannot fuel the spells or enact the rituals, they can advise even an unskilled practitioner on how to cast a spell.

creativity or ambition.

A new brazen head costs 30 crowns. Older, wiser heads cost considerably more; there are heads in the inner sanctums of the Houses that contain many centuries' worth of secret knowledge, whose loss would be an unparalleled disaster for the House.

A brazen head consumes one unit of Strain a week.

Computation: Brazen heads can swiftly calculate a solution to even complex problems; it gains a +1 insight bonus to any one Intelligence-based check for every hour spent pondering it. While pondering, the head cannot be interrupted.

Cacaphractoi Stalwart

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 3d10+20 (36 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5

Attack: Blades +5 melee (2d6+3)

Full Attack: Blades +5 melee (2d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Whirling blades

Special Qualities: Defensive stance, construct traits.

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con −, Int 0, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: —

Feats: Dodge, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 2

The creature moving towards you resembles a spinning top the size of a mortal, with nine sharp blade-arms protruding from a dome atop the machine.

These machines are produced by the living machine Cacaphractus on the Sixth Circle. They are scouts and

defensive weapons, constructed in great numbers and sent spinning off around the outskirts of the machine city. Stalwarts are mindless on their own, but they can be guided by the more powerful machinists. The garrison forces of House Zethu were extremely adept at fighting stalwarts – the machines have no ranged weapons, so they were bombarded with shattergun barrages and bile shot until reduced to spinning scrap.

Since the retreat of Zethu from the line surrounding Cacaphractus, stalwarts have been seen in far greater numbers, demolishing the innermost siege weapons and cannons.

Whirling Blades: A stalwart can activate this ability once per day. For one round, it gains the benefit of the Whirlwind Attack feat, allowing it to make an attack at its highest attack bonus on every creature within reach.

Defensive Stance: A stalwart can withdraw its blade-arms and other limbs inside its housing and slow its headlong movement, protecting its vulnerable parts. While in this state, the stalwart cannot attack and its movement drops to 20 feet, but it gains a +6 shield bonus to Armour Class.

Cacaphractoi Machinist

Huge Construct

Hit Dice: 12d10+40 (106 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (–2 size, +12 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+24

Attack: Slam +14 melee (2d8+7)

Full Attack: 2 slams +14 melee (2d8+7)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Copper death, blades and welders

Special Qualities: DR 10/–, command constructs, construct traits, repair

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 10, Con –, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Craft (engineering) +14, Listen +9, Spot +9

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 8

A huge four-legged creature lumbers towards you. It is roughly the size and shape of an elephant, but made of metal. Chains and wires hang from a tangle of metal on its back.

The machinists were first seen collecting raw materials and scrap metal for the living city. Then,

they were as mindless as the stalwart defenders. The new generation of machinists have some level of intelligence, as they can range much further afield now that the Zethu do not watch Cacaphractus as closely.

The machinists work to repair and extend the city. They are primarily engineers, although they are quite skilled in a fight. Some machinists have even been sent to build new outposts; the Zethu garrison once levelled all such outposts and expansions as a matter of course, but now the growth of the machine city is left unchecked.

Copper Death: The wires hanging from the construct's back can be animated by its will. Anyone within reach of the machinist is vulnerable to attacks from the wires, which hook onto flesh and drive themselves into ears, eyes, veins and other vulnerable spots. Each round, anyone within reach of the machinist must make an opposed grapple check (Escape Artist can be used instead of grapple). If the check is failed, the character is not grappled, but suffers penalties depending on how many grapple checks he has failed in a row, as follows:

Grapple	
Checks Failed	Effect
1	Wires hook on; 1d4 damage
2	Wires tangle; character is <i>entangled</i> and takes 2d4 damage
3	Wires push; character is temporarily blinded for 1d10 minutes and takes 3d4 damage
4	Wires push deeper; character suffers 1d4 points of temporary Dexterity or Strength damage (attacker's choice) and 4d4 points of damage
5	Penetration; character is permanently blinded and deafened.

Blades and Welders: A machinist can use its built-in tools and devices to inflict damage. This requires a full-attack action and has an attack bonus of only +6. However, the attack deals 4d6+10 points of damage, half of which is fire damage.

Repair: As a full-round action, a machinist can attempt to repair itself or another construct. It must make a Craft (engineering) check at a DC equal to 10 + the Hit Dice of the target; the target regains one hit point per point of difference between the check result and the DC if the check is successful.

Command Constructs: A machinist can telepathically command any Cacaphractoi constructs with less Hit

Dice, within 300 feet.

Cacaphractoi Armature

Large Construct

Hit Dice: 4d10+30 (52 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 0 ft.

Armour Class: 13 (–1 size, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+7

Attack: –

Full Attack: –

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Construct traits, graft

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con –, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 15

Skills: Craft (engineering) +9, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (engineering) +9, Sorcery +13, Torture +10

Feats: Related Knowledge (Sorcery & Knowledge (arcana)), Skill Focus (Sorcery)

Challenge Rating: 4

Rituals Known: *Binding I, summoning I, warding I, II, command the elements, deceit of the clouded eye, invisibility*

The armatures are another new development on the battlefields around Cacaphractus. These machines incorporate demons into their structure – captured demons are dragged off by machinists into the depths of the machine city, to be converted into these horrors. This bears some similarity to abhorei techniques, suggesting secret contacts between Abhor and the machine realm.

The chief purpose of the armatures is to use the demon hosts as tools for casting sorcerous rituals – the armatures have the intellect of a brazen head and know a wealth of spells, but without a living iliaster reserve, the armatures cannot make use of them. While most armature hosts were captured in battle, others were given as tribute or in trade to the machines. While no angelic or mortal armatures have been sighted, the few Zethu sages left to watch the growth of the machines suggest that this can only be a matter of time.

Physically, an armature looks like an ornate cage of brass and bronze. Cables and wires hang down along the victim's spine. The cage includes wheels at the base, to take the weight of the assembly off the victim, as well as long mechanical arms that clamp onto the hands of the victim.

An armature uses the same rules as an abhorei with the basic Graft ability (see above). The armature can only be attached to Small, Medium or Large creatures. The creature uses its original claw or melee weapon attacks, but cannot bite while within the cage or used ranged weapons. The armature cannot fly without the use of sorcery or other artificial aids.

When bonded to a Merchant Imp (see below)

Cacaphractoi Armature

Large Demon/Construct Hybrid

Hit Dice: 5d6–5 plus 4d10+30 (64 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 18 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Claw +0 melee (1d4–2)

Full Attack: Claw +0 melee (1d4–2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +7, Will +7

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 15

Skills: Craft (engineering) +10, Heal +10, Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Sense Motive +8, Sorcery +15, Torture +10

Feats: Fly-by Attack, Hover, Related Knowledge (Sorcery & Knowledge (arcana), Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (sorcery),

Mutations:

⊗ **Imp:** Wings, Shrink (2 iliaster/Diminutive), Suggestion

⊗ **Crawling Flesh:** Crawling Flesh (+1 AC)

⊗ **Ice Waste:** Cold Resistance 10

Iliaster Reserve: 11

Challenge Rating: 6

Rituals Known: *Binding I, summoning I, warding I, III, command the elements, deceit of the clouded eye, invisibility*

In this case, the unfortunate imp looks almost lost within the machine. It resembles a hideous puppet trapped within the cage. Cables and wires are driven into the demon's head and neck, connecting it to a serene metal face that hangs above the prisoner.

Ragbody

Large Construct

Hit Dice: 16d10+30 (134 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 16 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+27
Attack: Slam +19 melee (2d6+7)
Full Attack: 2 slams +19 melee (2d6+7)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Mass animation
Special Qualities: Self-Repair
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +5
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 8, Con –, Int 0, Wis 11, Cha 3
Skills: Craft (engineering) +6
Feats: Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)
Challenge Rating: 9

A bizarre scarecrow-like thing made of scrap metal and rags lumbers towards you. You can see dozens of little white shreds fluttering from its wire frame – the wastrel souls that animate the monster.

Ragbodies occur mainly on the Sixth Circle, where the industry of the Infernum is concentrated. Wastrel ghosts flit and swarm among the scrap-heaps and refuse piles like spectral butterflies, occasionally coming to rest on a rusted boiler or discarded rack. Slowly, the broken souls and broken machinery grow closer together until a ragbody slowly forms out of the ruin. These shambling creatures are constructs

given form and mocking life not by Zethu ingenuity or sorcery, but by the blind, desperate vitality of broken souls.

Like their wastrel swarm sires, ragbodies are virtually mindless. They roam the slag-heaps randomly, attacking or ignoring whatever they come across. Sometimes, they build more bodies for other wastrel swarms to inhabit; others just tear apart or even work in the factories where they toiled when still coherent.

As ragbodies are sustained by souls, they are subject to sorceries and barriers that affect the damned.

Mass Animation: As a full-round action, a ragbody can transfer some of the wastrel souls it contains into other heaps of waste and scrap metal. The ragbody transfers hit points to these other structures; it must transfer at least 20 hit points to a new ragbody and cannot transfer more than half its current hit points in any round. The target scrap must be within 60 feet of the ragbody. If the target scrap has been assembled into an empty ragbody, then the new ragbody rises up at the end of the full-round action; otherwise, it takes another 1d4 rounds to form.

Self-Repair: As a full-round action, a ragbody can attempt to repair itself. It must make a Craft (engineering) check (DC 16). If the check is successful, the construct regains a number of hit points equal to the check result –15.

Damned Souls

Every day, Hell gets a little more crowded. Those souls who were corrupt in life are damned in death. Fresh damned rain from the skies and plummet into the pit, where they are hunted down and gathered by demons. The plasm of the damned oils the wheels of industry; iliaster extracted from the damned keep the demon hosts sated and strong.

The torment of the damned is eternal. They do not age and cannot be destroyed. At worst, a damned can be ripped apart into a million pieces, reducing him to nothing but a naked point of agonised consciousness called a wastrel. The ectoplasmic body of a damned can be crushed, torn, tortured and mutilated endlessly, an eternal cycle of torment and slow, painful healing.

The vast majority of the damned are in the torture factories and slave pens, where they are methodically tormented to extract iliaster, then thrown into the pits to heal until they are ready to be torn apart again. Others have been reprocessed, transformed into living



objects or weapons or even building material. There are fortresses in Hell where the walls scream.

A fraction of the damned are permitted some small measure of freedom. They are employed as foot-soldiers by the House armies, especially House Zethu, and as servants and labourers in the fortresses and pain fields. Other damned have escaped from the torment cycle, fleeing into the wilderness or taking refuge in the Free Cities. There have even been damned who have risen high in the hierarchy – while a damned cannot hold a title, they have been trusted lieutenants, powers behind thrones or grey eminences ruling over whole Houses.

Standing

Damned are at the bottom of the Infernal food chain. Demons see them as ambulatory food bags, fit for nothing but torture and extraction. They are property. When a newly fallen damned is captured, it is branded with the mark of one of the Houses.

Damned Souls as Characters

At the Games Master's discretion, damned souls may be available as playable characters. A Player might start as one of the damned or become a damned soul after being killed as a mortal.

A starting always-damned character must choose one of the following options:

- ⊗ The damned was never captured and branded; he belongs to no-one, but any demon might try to claim him.
- ⊗ The damned belongs to one of the Houses and

bears their brand.

- ⊗ The damned is branded by one of the Houses but has escaped.

If converting from a mortal to a damned soul, just replace the character's mortal levels with damned levels. The character loses all mutations and the ability to generate iliaster through will alone, but does gain the healing and unnatural strength of the damned. A mortal begins unbranded.

Damned Base State

- ⊗ Physically, a damned looks like a grey-skinned and somewhat sickly reflection of how it appeared in life.
- ⊗ Damned do not need to eat, drink or breathe, but feel the pains of hunger, thirst and asphyxiation.
- ⊗ Damned do not age.
- ⊗ Damned do not need to sleep, but can still be fatigued or exhausted by work or travel.
- ⊗ A damned is *shredded* when reduced below 0 hit points. While shredded, the damned cannot act, but is still conscious. At –25 hit points, the damned lacks the coherency to even think or perceive the world. At –50 hit points, the soul is reduced to a wretched tatter of consciousness that will never be whole again, and the character is effectively insane and unplayable.
- ⊗ A damned begins with a Corruption of 5 to 20 (Player's choice).
- ⊗ Damned cannot gain mutations while disembodied. A damned in an embodied shell (see below) can gain mutations, but these are lost if the shell is destroyed.
- ⊗ Damned with a Corruption of 11 or more can be

Damned Terminology

House Haimon has the most experience in dealing with souls and its jargon and terminology has passed into common usage.

Annihilation: To destroy a soul beyond all hope of re-cohering – in game terms, to drive the damned below –50 hit points.

Cohere: A damned is said to cohere when it regains strength, hit points and its physical shape after damage or torture. The more a damned soul coheres, the more it looks as it did in life.

Coherent: A damned with some level of intelligence and physical ability. A coherent damned could work in a factory or fight in the legions. An incoherent damned is fit only for torture.

Incohere: The opposite of cohering, to 'incohere a soul' is a euphemism for torturing it to the point of annihilation.

Incoherent: An incoherent soul is one with a barely discernible form – not shredded, but far from coherent.

Shredded: A soul that has lost coherency is said to be shredded. Shredded souls are too damaged to be very useful in extracting iliaster.

Wastrel: What remains of a soul after annihilation.

held in Covenants as normal.

Iliaster and Torture

Damned can be tortured for iliaster (see *Book of the Damned*, The Downward Spiral, page 219). They cannot spend iliaster, but can drink it. Each point of iliaster consumed by a damned soul restores 1d10 hit points to it. As damned cannot spend iliaster, they cannot make use of feats or devices that drain iliaster from the host, nor can they cast sorcerous rituals easily.

Damned heal hit point damage at the normal rate (one point per character level per day). They heal ability score damage considerably quicker, at a rate of one point per hour.

Abilities

Damned have no ability score modifiers. They retain the same ability scores they had in life.

They use the same base attack bonus, saving throw, skill, feat and hit point progressions that mortals do (see *Book of the Damned*).

The longer a damned goes without being shredded, the more human-looking it becomes. A damned that has recently managed to recohere itself looks like a hairless, emaciated empty-eyed shadow of itself in life, roughly shaped from ectoplasm; one that has not been tortured for months looks perfectly human and even healthy, and has ectoplasmic memories of organs, blood and so on. Leave a damned to 'settle', and its spirit will attempt to ape its appearance in life.

Damned Feats

The following feats are only available to damned characters. If a character is being converted from mortal to damned, he may replace mortal-only feats with damned-only feats.

Flowing Combat

You can use the fluid nature of your ectoplasmic body to your advantage.

Prerequisite: Damned only, Plasmic Body.

Benefits: You have a 50% chance of negating any critical hits inflicted on you, as you simply dissolve the injured part of the body and reform it. You also have a 50% chance to negate sneak attacks.

Normal: Damned suffer critical hits normally.

Ghost

You can become incorporeal.

Prerequisites: Damned only, Plasmic Body, Selfshape.

Benefits: You can attempt to become incorporeal by making a Concentration check (DC10). If the check is successful, you become incorporeal for one minute. You can attempt to prolong your incorporeality or become incorporeal again after solidifying, but the DC increases by +5 every time until you have rested for at least eight hours.

Improved Iliaster Yield

You are an especially potent soul.

Prerequisite: Damned only.

Benefit: Torturing you yields 1d4+2 points of iliaster instead of the normal 1d4.

Normal: A tormented soul yields 1d4 points of iliaster when damaged; the amount of damage depends on the skill of the torturer.

Special: Especially corrupt or pure souls yield extra iliaster.

Killer of the Dead

You are adept at injuring other damned.

Prerequisite: Damned only.

Benefit: Your critical threat range is increased by one no matter what weapon you are using when fighting another damned soul. Furthermore, you automatically negate the benefits of the Flowing Combat feat.

Plasmic Body

You are adept at utilising your ectoplasmic nature.

Prerequisite: Damned only.

Benefit: You have a +2 racial bonus to Disguise and Escape Artist checks. Furthermore, you can reattach severed limbs by just holding the severed members to the stump or simply regrowing the limb in a few seconds. You also have a +2 natural armour bonus.

Possessor

You can attempt to possess living beings.

Prerequisites: Damned only, Plasmic Body, Selfshape, Ghost.

Benefit: While in your incorporeal ghost form, you can attempt to possess a living target by making an incorporeal touch attack. If successful, you may attempt to possess that target. You may make such an attempt once per day.

Resist Shaping

You can maintain your integrity when others attempt to soulshape you.

Prerequisite: Damned only, Constitution 15.

Benefit: The Craft (soulshaping) DC to alter your form is increased by +10. If the check is failed, you are not shaped at all.

SelfShape

You can alter your own shape using soulshaping.

Prerequisites: Damned only, Resist Shaping, Plasmic Body.

Benefit: You can soulshape yourself using the Craft (soulshaping) skill. You may shape yourself a number of times per day equal to your Constitution modifier.

Swift Reconstitution

You heal quickly, allowing you to reform your body's limbs in combat.

Prerequisite: Damned only.

Benefit: You may take Move actions when reduced between -1 and -24 hit points.

Normal: A shredded character can perceive but cannot act.

Burning Dead of Blackstone Keep

(5th level damned)

Medium Damned

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack Bonus, Average Saves and Feats, Poor Skills

Hit Dice: 5d12+10 (42 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+2 Dex, +5 chain, +2 shield, +1 helmet), touch 12, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+7

Attack: Spear +8 melee (1d8+4 plus 2d6 fire/x3)

Full Attack: Spear +8 melee (1d8+4 plus 2d6 fire/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Flaming weapons, burning aura

Special Qualities: Immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +0

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +6, Listen +3, Spot +3, Warcraft +4

Feats: Martial Weapons Proficiency, Power Attack, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus (spear), Weapon Specialisation (spear)

Corruption: 16

Challenge Rating: 4

Equipment: Chain, heavy shield, skull helmet, spear

The damned soul marching towards you wears blackened, half-melted armour; as if it had passed through a furnace. Its ectoplasmic body burns as though on fire and an aura of flame and black smoke surrounds it.

The burning dead are the survivors – if that term can have any meaning in this case – of the garrison at Blackstone Keep. The fortress was bombarded by Sturrach fiends during the war, in the single greatest hellfire blast in history. These eerie souls walked out of that conflagration on fire and have burned ever since.

The burning dead are still part of the Haimon legions and are still somewhat loyal to the demons. Their handlers report the dead have become unruly and sullen; many dead have slipped away into fire-pits and lava flows, walking through the flames to freedom. What these furious dead intend is a mystery to House Haimon.

These spirits are useful warriors; their immunity to fire allows them to easily pass through otherwise impassable hellish terrain. The cohort of the dead is a familiar and feared



sight on the battlegrounds of the Fifth, but they always return to their home at Blackstone.

The souls are still armed with the traditional chainmail, shield and spear of the Haimon legions.

Flaming Weapons: The spears of the burning dead are alight, as if they had the flaming property and deal an extra 2d6 points of fire damage on a successful hit.

Burning Aura: Any creature within 10 feet of a burning dead takes 1d6 points of fire damage from the heat. When the creatures fight in formation, the resulting inferno can damage even demons.

Immunity to Fire: The burning dead are immune to both fire and hellfire.

Vulnerability to Cold: Burning dead take twice as much damage as normal from cold-based attacks.

Animated and Embodied Dead

Several methods exist for lending temporary flesh to the damned. The simplest is the House Haimon ability to animate a corpse by implanting a soul into it. This requires a fresh mortal corpse, which is always easy to acquire in Hell. The sorcerous ritual *embody soul* grows a synthetic body for the soul to inhabit, but is considerably more costly in iliaster.

Animated corpses need no maintenance other than sewing bits back on should they rot off. Embodied damned require food, drink and sleep as normal. In either form, the damned soul within lends vitality and movement to the flesh. While animated or embodied, the body has (1d8 + the damned's Constitution modifier) hit points per level of the damned soul. These are essentially extra hit points for the damned; when the body is reduced to 0 hit points, the soul emerges and becomes corporeal in an instant.

Animated or embodied corpses cannot heal damage naturally.

A damned soul in embodied form has a CR of its level +2.

Embodied Dead (7th level damned)

Medium Damned

Progressions: Good Skills and Base Attack Bonus, Average Hit Points and Feats, Poor Saves

Hit Dice: 7d8+10 plus 7d8+10 (90 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 22 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +2 spawnleather, +1 shield, +2 facemask), touch 13, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+7

Attack: Longsword +7 melee (1d8) or shattergun +10 ranged (2d8)

Full Attack: Longsword +7/+2 melee (1d8) or shattergun +10/+5 ranged (2d8)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +8, Concentration +7, Disable Device +11, Diplomacy +5, Drive +8, Escape Artist +6, Grovel +10, Hide +11, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +13, Tumble +11

Feats: Burst Fire, Double Tap, Drive-by Attack, Exotic Weapon (shattergun), Martial Weapons Proficiency, Quick Reload

Corruption: 16

Challenge Rating: 9

Equipment: Spawnleather, shattergun, longsword, heavy shield, facemask, helicycle

The figure coming towards you on a helicycle appears human at first glance, but you soon spot that her left hand has been blown off in some previous combat, and an ectoplasmic claw instead of bone protrudes from the wounded arm.

An assassin bound to House Astyanath, this dead woman wears spawnleather over a vat-grown body. She is adept at driving a helicycle and can even fire her shattergun one-handed while driving. She corrals escaped and unbranded souls for the Astyanath torture palaces on the Sixth Circle.

Her body is wounded, missing one hand, but this does not impede her in the slightest. The vat-grown flesh may have been burnt away, but it is no more than a shield for the plasmic form within. She has been soulshaped to increase her Armour Class.

Haimon Legionnaire (3rd level damned)

Medium Damned

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack Bonus, Average Skills and Feats, Poor Saves

Hit Dice: 3d12+6 (25 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 25 ft. (5 squares)

Armour Class: 21 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +5 chain, +2 shield, +1 helmet), touch 11, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Spear +6 melee (1d8+4) or javelin +4 ranged (1d6+2)

Full Attack: Spear +6 melee (1d8+4) or javelin +4 ranged (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Disguise +2, Escape Artist +3, Listen +7, Spot +7, Warcraft +5

Feats: Martial Weapons Proficiency, Plasmic Body, Weapon Focus (spear), Weapon Specialisation (spear)

Corruption: 15

Challenge Rating: 3

Equipment: Chain mail, heavy shield, spear, helmet, shortsword, two javelins

The damned warrior before you resembles a Roman legionnaire, bearing an iron shield and wearing chain mail. It carries a wickedly sharp spear. It is marked with the symbol of House Haimon.

The legions of the Deathly are the largest army in the whole Infernum. Millions upon millions of damned souls stand in serried ranks on the Third Circle. Their spears are like a forest, their matched shields like a wall of impenetrable iron. The legions are organised along Roman lines; a legion is composed of ten cohorts, which are subdivided into six manipuli, which are themselves subdivided into two or more centuries. All officers below the level of cohort commander are damned souls; in some legions, the only demon in the whole army is the one at the head of the legion. In some cases, officers and elite combatants are soulshaped to enhance their armour.

Haimon legionnaires carry two javelins in addition to their spears and shields. The customary tactic is to hurl the javelins at the enemy, then form a shield wall and advance. The Deathly Legion is perhaps the proudest organisation of damned souls in Hell; while the vast majority of their fellow dead are tortured wretches and slaves, the Deathly Legionnaires are feared and respected warriors. They know that this respect is born out of their martial prowess, so the dead train and practice eternally to maintain their exalted rank in Hell.

Harrower (12th level Damned)

Medium Damned

Progressions: Good Saving Throws and Base Attack, Average Feats and Hit Points, Poor Skills

Hit Dice: 12d8+24 (78 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +8 natural, +2 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+15

Attack: Longsword +16 melee (1d8+3)

Full Attack: Longsword +16/+11 melee (1d8+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: –

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +8

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Craft (soulshape) +7, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +4, Handle Animal +3, Heal +3, Ride +8, Survival +6, Spot +6

Feats: Ghost, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Mounted Combat, Plasmic Body, Resist Shaping, Ride-by Attack, Sense of Self, Selfshape, Spirited Charge

Challenge Rating: 12

Equipment: Large steel shield, bonded longsword

The figure moving towards you resembles a damned soul, but its plasmic form has been reshaped into plate armour. A longsword is merged with its right hand. Bright dead eyes shine out from beneath the living helm.

The order of the Harrowers accepts all souls of good intent into their ranks. This is the shade of a Harrower Knight who died in battle (for his mortal incarnation, see the mortal Knight of the Harrowing, below). He has been stripped of his mount, his weapons and armour, for the damned can fight without such accoutrements. Instead, the soul has learned to alter his own ectoplasmic form, shaping his ghostly flesh into armour and merging a blade with his arm.

The dead members of the Harrowers are not lower-ranking than their mortal or angelic brothers-in-arms, but there is a general consensus among the knights that the quick are more valuable and worthy of protection than the dead; life is precious, but every mortal Harrower will one day be counted among the damned until the trumpet of victory sounds.

Slave (1st level Damned)

Medium Damned

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Feats, Average

Skills and Saving Throws, Poor Base Attack Bonus
Hit Dice: 1d12+8 (14 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armour Class: 11 (+1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/+2
Attack: Club +2 melee (1d4+2)
Full Attack: Club +2 melee (1d4+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: –
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12
Skills: Grovel +5, Hide +5, Move Silently +5
Feats: Endurance, Toughness x2
Challenge Rating: 1
Equipment: Club

A skeletally thin and deathly pale figure stumbles through the dust. It holds a scavenged piece of metal in one hand as a club, although you note that it has knotted its fingers through holes in the weapon to keep it from slipping from its grip.

One of the millions of damned souls who suffer in the mills of Hell, this wretch has not been tortured for more than a few decades – it is still capable of thought. Given time, its body might even settle into a more recognisable form; it might remember its name or its gender or anything other than pain. For the moment though, its only thought is escape.

Warghost

Medium Damned

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack, Average Feats and Saving Throws, Poor Skills
Hit Dice: 4d12+8 (34 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armour Class: 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+7
Attack: Short sword +7 melee (1d6+3/19-20)
Full Attack: Short sword +5/+0 melee and +5/+0 melee (1d6+3 and 1d6+1/19-20)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Frenzy
Special Qualities: –
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 0, Wis 13, Cha 6
Skills: Spot +5
Feats: Combat Reflexes, Improved Two-Weapon

Fighting, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Two-Weapon Fighting
Challenge Rating: 5
Equipment: Two shortswords

The damned figure is a tattered shade. There are ghastly rents all over its body. It is mostly translucent, but trails of blood and gore spiral through it like a ruddy labyrinth of pain. It clutches two rusted shortswords in its hands.

Warghosts are the remnants of damned souls who were shredded in battle. The soul itself is reduced to an anguished speck of consciousness – a wastrel – but the hatred and bloodlust of the fighting soul remains and mixes with the spilt iliaster. The result is a warghost, a shell of charged plasm that continues to fight even when the animating soul has departed.

Warghosts are a common nuisance on the battlefields of the Infernum. They lack the intellect to be used in the legions, so units of young demons or Legionnaires are sent in to kill the ghosts of the ghosts of their former comrades.

In battle, warghosts use whatever weapons they salvaged from the battlefield – most commonly spears or shortswords.

Frenzy: A warghost can enter a frenzy at will once per day. The ghost gets a +4 morale bonus to Strength and Constitution (giving it bonus hit points as well), a +10 feet increase in base speed and a –2 penalty to Armour Class. Furthermore, the ghost will continue to fight until reduced below –25 hit points. A frenzying warghost will not stop fighting until it or its foes have been destroyed.

Wastrels

When a damned soul is torn apart so badly that it can endure no more slow regenerations, no more pain and suffering, it becomes a wastrel – a tiny mindless wisp of ectoplasm that floats on the hot winds of Hell. Wastrels are too thin and frail to produce even plasmic iliaster. They still retain a little sense of self and can sometimes be seen rapping at windows or clustering around fires, drawn like moths to light or heat. House Astyanath has experimented with tortures so refined they can bring pain to the remote dead, while Haimon has built great ghost-catching funnels that suck in the wastrels, hoping to create new patchwork souls that could be put to work – but both of these grand projects came to naught. For the moment, the ultimate fate of every damned soul in Hell is to one day become a little flying rag of nothing, a spectral vermin with no

mind or hope.

Wastrel Swarms

Diminutive Damned (Swarm)

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack, Average Saves and Skills, Poor Feats

Hit Dice: 5d12+10 (42 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: Fly 20 ft. (4 squares) (perfect)

Armour Class: 16 (+4 size, +2 Dex), touch 16, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: –/–

Attack: Swarm 1d6

Full Attack: Swarm 1d6

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Distract, iliaster drain, whispering

Special Qualities: Swarm traits

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 0, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills: –

Feats: –

Challenge Rating: 3

You see a horde of white wisps of ectoplasmic cloud moving towards you like a swarm of fireflies.

Wastrel swarms are a relatively rare event; while congregations of wastrels are common enough, it takes a particular powerful soul-remnant to catalyse them into a buzzing, vengeful swarm. Wastrel swarms can remember a fraction of their previous existence, just enough to give them a concept of hunger and desire. They want more life, more warmth, even in their ruined condition.

The swarms attempt to suck iliaster from other creatures to feed themselves. Damned are no good to the swarms, but they can drain mortals, angels and demons with equal ease. The swarms are difficult to destroy, as they are composed of dozens of resilient soulshards, all of which have already been completely destroyed at least once. The normal tactic is just to flee the area, as the swarms lack the intelligence to follow. Another option is to burn them out with hellfire, which swiftly annihilates the souls.

Although wastrels are a form of damned soul, they are destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points.

Iliaster Drain: A wastrel swarm drains an amount of iliaster equal to the damage it inflicts with its swarm attack if the target has an iliaster reserve or can produce it at will.

Whispers: The maddening whispers of a swarm can distract a combatant. If a creature begins its turn within a swarm, he must make a Will save (DC 7). If the saving throw is failed, the character is confused for one round.

Distract: A character who begins his turn inside the swarm must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or be nauseated for one round.

Wastrel swarms can give rise to ragbodies (see above).

Demons

See *Book of the Damned* for the demon base state. The demons here are a set of sample horrors, typical examples of their Houses.

Of House Astyanath

The demons of House Astyanath almost always carry flayers. They prefer light armour, especially armour with thorns or silver spikes. Their equipment is invariably of fine quality and has an almost eerie beauty

Torturer

(5th level Astyanath Slaver)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 5d8+5 (27 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 25 ft. (5 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+3 natural, +5 chain, +1 shield, +1 helmet), touch 10, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+7

Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d8+1d4+2) or flayer +8 melee (2d6+4/18-20/x4)

Full Attack: Claw +7 melee (1d8+1d4+2) or flayer +8 melee (2d6+4/18-20/x4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +4

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 16, Cha 14

Skills: Intimidate +6, Listen +7, Torture +14

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (flayer), Martial Weapons Proficiency, Skill Focus (torture)

Mutations:

⊗ **Slaver:** Soulshape

⊗ **Astyanath:** Thorns (+1d4 natural weapon damage)

⊗ **Possessor:** Preparation of the Mind (+4 to control checks), Possession (six iliaster to begin possession)

- attempt);
- ⊗ **Claws:** Claws (Increased claw damage)
 - Iliaster Reserve:** 11
 - Challenge Rating:** 5
 - Equipment:** Chainmail, torture equipment, soulbound flayer (+1 hit, +2 damage, bane)

'Have you met my little friend?'

This bloated demon is covered in bony barbs. It carries a wickedly sharp flaying device in its oversized hands.

This fearsome slaver has made its own bane weapon by binding a strong mortal soul to a flayer, which is its greatest joy. It is rather single-minded, only associating with its fellow demons when they need its services. It does take pride in its work, being part of the Astyanath tradition of expert torment.

In combat, it uses its flayer wherever possible, switching to its claws when it plans to possess an opponent. As its Possession ability is costly, it only makes the attempt when it has a good chance of succeeding.

Joyous Legionnaire

(10th level Astyanath Fiend)

- Large Demon**
Hit Dice: 10d10 (55 hp)
Initiative: +4
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)
Armour Class: 19 (–2 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural, +2 spawnleather, +2 facemask), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+17
Attack: Claw +12 melee (1d10+3) or bile rifle +14 ranged (2d4 acid)
Full Attack: Claw +12 melee (1d10+3) or bile rifle +14/+9 ranged (2d4 acid)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +11, Will +3
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 8
Skills: Concentration +5, Craft (hellfire) +10, Diplomacy +10, Hide +12, Knowledge (infernography) +8, Spot +9, Torture +9, Tumble +11, Warcraft +10
Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (flayer), Fly-by Attack, Hover, Iliaster Reserve, Weapon Focus (bile rifle)
Mutations:
- ⊗ **Fiend:** Wings, Hellfire Bomb (3 iliaster), Improved Flight
 - ⊗ **Astyanath:** Thorns (+1d4 natural weapon damage), Endure Agony (fight below 0 hp for 1

- iliaster/round)
- ⊗ **Intelligence:** Cunning Intellect (+2 to all Knowledge checks)
- ⊗ **Monstrous Strength:** Brute Force (1 ½ Strength for breaking objects)
- ⊗ **Flies:** Buzzing Voice (+2 Bluff, Diplomacy, –2 Seduction, Perform), Cloak of Vermin (DR 2/fire, sickens foes)

Iliaster Reserve: 23

Challenge Rating: 10

Equipment: Spawnleather armour, bile rifle, facemask helmet, implanted reserve (5 points), two hellbroths (Wisdom, Dexterity), set of tearing hooks

'There is joy in the victory, but it is as nothing compared to the joy in the chase and the joy in the kill.'

This fiend is covered in sharp thorns and buzzing flies. Its muscled body flits agilely through the air.

A young scout for the Joyous Legion, this demon prefers to fight from a distance with its bile rifle. When threatened, it uses hellfire and its hellbroths to accurately blast its foes. A set of tearing hooks hang from the back of its helmet, which it will use if forced to survive on its own behind enemy lines.

As the legionnaire has not yet attained the perfection of the Pleasure for Pain mutation, it does not stand with the vanguard of the elite Legion. However, hellfire and bile assaults can soften up a foe before it is merrily slaughtered by an ecstatic legionnaire.

Of House Carthenay

The banker demons prefer to stay well protected behind their mercenary bodyguards and defensive fortifications. They go into battle only when there is great profit to be won.

Banker

(3rd level Carthenay Imp)

- Small Demon**
Hit Dice: 3d6–3 (7 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)
Armour Class: 19 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural, +2 spawnleather, +1 helmet), touch 14, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/–3
Attack: Memorial –2 melee (varies) or light crossbow +7 ranged (1d6)
Full Attack: Memorial –2 melee (varies) or light crossbow +7 ranged (1d6)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort 0, Ref +6, Will +7

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +5, Gather Information +5, Grovel +5, Hide +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +6, Spot +8

Feats: Dodge, Hover, Iron Will

Mutations:

⊗ **Imp:** Wings

⊗ **Carthenay:** Misers and Lawyers (1 iliaster/photographic memory)

⊗ **Wandering Eyes:** Extra eye (eye on hand, +2 to Spot and Search)

Iliaster Reserve: 9

Challenge Rating: 3

Equipment: Spawnleather armour, crossbow, helmet, memorial charged with a 15-point wound

'You owe us... hmm, it would really be simplest if you just gave us all you own now. Plus a 5% handling fee, of course.'

This little ink-stained imp perches behind its ledger, running one hand down the columns of debtors.

This minor clerk is a spy for a more powerful Carthenay demon, who gifted the imp with a fine memorial. The imp keeps the weapon charged down in the bank's torture chambers. It prefers to attack from ambush, spying around corners with its extra eye.

Lawyer (15th level Carthenay Deceiver)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 15d8 (67 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 25 (+9 natural, +6 crawling armour), touch 10, flat-footed 25

Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+14

Attack: Claw +14 melee (1d4-1) or soulbound mace +15 melee (1d8 (plus 2d6 frost when activated))

Full Attack: Claw +14 melee (1d4-1) or soulbound mace +15/+10/+5 melee (1d8 (plus 2d6 when activated))

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +13

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Appraise +18, Bluff +26, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +34, Gather Information +13, Knowledge (law) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +12, Listen +12, Perform +13, Search +12, Sense Motive +16

Feats: Ability Focus (Possession), Extra Skill

(Perform), Iliaster Reserve, Iron Will, Related Knowledge (Diplomacy and Bluff), Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Mutations:

⊗ **Deceiver:** Fell Insight (+4 Diplomacy & Sense Motive), Possession (5 iliaster/attempt), Mesmeric Glance (3 iliaster/hypnotise foes)

⊗ **Carthenay:** Misers and Lawyers (1 iliaster/photographic memory), Shit Gold (1 iliaster/1d4 Horns);

⊗ **Man:** Of Mortal Shape (5 iliaster/shapeshift into mortal form)

⊗ **Ice Waste:** Cold Resistance 10, Icy Armour (+3 AC, can spent 3 iliaster for a further +2 bonus)

⊗ **Disease:** Pestilent Self

⊗ **Thunderbolt:** Bones of Iron (Electrical Resistance 10)

⊗ **Insect Aspect:** Chitin Armour (+4 AC)

⊗ **Lies:** Liar's Gift (1 iliaster/+2 Bluff or Diplomacy), Hypnotic Speech (3 iliaster gives a target a -5 penalty to Concentration or Sense Motive if they fail a Will save (DC 20)), Undetectable Lie (1 iliaster), Believe the Lies (2 iliaster/round to create Bluff-based illusion)

Iliaster Reserve: 25

Challenge Rating: 15

Equipment: Crawling armour, soulbound mace (+1 hit, +1 damage, +2d6 frost/3 iliaster)

'Good afternoon. Ah, you're the chap who tried to assassinate me, aren't you. Well, as luck would have it, I'm your defence attorney. The irony of it! But don't worry, I'm quite capable of defending you despite the conflict of interest. First, you're going to confess to five or ten niggling crimes that I never killed anyone for...'

You can hardly tell what this demon is. It is encased in ice, and looks insectoid beneath that frozen lair. A second set of bugs scuttle through the ice, dripping goo from their mandibles. Bizarrely, it is wearing a barrister's wig.

This demon long since abandoned the finery and formal wear of its fellow barristers. The traditional powdered wig now sits atop a hulking mound of crawling bugs and ice shards. The horror's distinctive appearance is one of its greatest assets – the demon can use its secret ability to shift into mortal form to masquerade as a human slave. It is also a skilled possessor and keeps a secret stash of hellbroths to augment its mental powers.

Of House Glabretch

Demons of this House are always armed – the

Glabretchi are so unpopular that they are often attacked by bored young demons for no reason other than the disease-mongers reputation as... filthy disease-mongers and renegades.

Scout

(4th level Glabretch Beast)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 4d8+19 (37 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 21 (+4 natural, +6 breastplate, +1 skull helmet), touch 10, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+6

Attack: Bite +6 melee (3d8+2) or hellcannon +4 ranged (varies)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (3d8+2) or hellcannon +4 ranged (varies)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +6

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 8

Skills: Grovel +3, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +6, Survival +5

Feats: Extra Skill (Spot), Martial Weapons Proficiency, Toughness

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Glabretch:** Fungal Coating (DR 2/fire), Lesser Fortification (25% of negating a critical hit)

- ⊗ **Devourer:** Monstrous Maw (increased bite damage) x2.

Iliaster Reserve: 10

Challenge Rating: 4

Equipment: Hellcannon, skull helmet, breastplate, three vials containing three points of iliaster each, one vial containing a disease

'Scuttle around the moliata, they said. Keep watch for intruders they said. Sit in the mud all year, they meant. Eat them all...'

You catch a glimpse of teeth and gun barrels poking out of a hole in the fungus.

This squat little horror is little more than a hellcannon and a big mouth on legs. Its fungal coating helps it blend into the surrounding moliata as it patrols the borders of House Glabretch. Its primary weapon is its hellcannon, although it is not especially accurate. The beast is capable of delivering a truly devastating bite attack for its size, which it switches to when the hellcannon is exhausted.

Disease-Monger (7th level Glabretch Incubus)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 7d8+24 (55 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 25 ft. (5 squares), fly 40 feet (average)



Armour Class: 18 (+2 natural, +6 shuckedskin armour), touch 10, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+6

Attack: Claw +6 melee (1d6–1) or light crossbow +7 ranged (1d8)

Attack: Claw +6 melee (1d6–1) or light crossbow +7/+2 ranged (1d8)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +7

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 16

Skills: Diplomacy +10, Grovel +5, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Ride +6, Seduction +13, Spot +6, Torture +6

Feats: Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness.

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Malcubi:** Allure (+4 Seduction, +2 Diplomacy & Grovel, Sire Children), Flying, Taste Dreams (psychic contacts)
- ⊗ **Disease:** Pestilent Self (sickens those nearby), Breed Disease (create illnesses)
- ⊗ **Wrath:** Wrath Strike (2 iliaster/+1 to hit)
- ⊗ **Vitality:** Unnatural Health (+1 hp/level)

Iliaster Reserve: 10

Challenge Rating: 7

Equipment: Soulbound shuckedskin armour with the animated ability, light crossbow

'Ah, you're nearly ripe my love. And your child will be a wonderful catastrophe.'

A handsome human male stands before you. His body appears perfect and unblemished, but there is a disquieting aura to him.

A rare malcubus among the foetid legions of House Glabretch, this demon has put his unique talents to good use. By mastering the chain of Disease, he has managed to introduce taints into his own seed. When he sires a child on a mortal woman, his new diseases incubate within the child, allowing the demon to avoid the unpleasant nature of having to contract the disease itself in order to deploy it.

The demon avoids combat using its wings. As soon as it takes to the air, it is difficult to take down – even driving the demon to unconsciousness will not stop it, as its animated armour can fly the demon to safety.

Of House Haimon

Haimon demons are dignified, refined, cold – and surrounded by dead legionnaires and bound souls.

Necromancer

(12th level Haimon Beast)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 12d8 (54 hp)

Initiative: –2

Speed: 30 ft.

Armour Class: 23 (+5 natural, +7 breastplate, +1 crawling hide), touch 10, flat-footed 23

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+14

Attack: Claw +18 melee (3d6+4)

Attack: Claw +18 melee (3d6+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +11

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 6, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 14

Skills: Concentration +15, Craft (soulshape) +20, Decipher Script +17, Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Sense Motive +9, Sorcery +24, Spot +9

Feats: Power Attack, Related Knowledge (Sorcery & Knowledge (arcana)), Sense of Self, Skill Focus (Craft (soulshape)), Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana)), Skill Focus (Sorcery)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Haimon:** Cold as the Dead (+4 to resist Influence attempts), Soulshape, Animate Dead, Master of Sorcery (+4 Sorcery)
- ⊗ **Claws:** Claws, Burning Claws (1 iliaster/round for hellfire damage), Massive Claws (+2 attack)
- ⊗ **Inferno:** Fire Resistance 10, Fire Blast (1 iliaster/1d6 fire damage), Inferno Aura (5 iliaster for 2d6 aura of fire extending to demon's reach)
- ⊗ **Crawling Flesh:** Crawling Hide (+1 AC)

Iliaster Reserve: 20

Challenge Rating: 12

Equipment: Soulbound breastplate (+2 AC), soulbound iron claws (+2 Hit, +2 Damage)

Rituals Known: *Binding I, IV, summoning I, IV, V, warding I, IV, astral projection, banishment, body walk, counterspell, discern magic, exorcism, iliaster drain, licence to depart, ritual preparation, sacrificial rite, crying, shield of force*

A lupine figure bathed in white flame and with huge armoured gauntlets approaches you.

A Lord of House Haimon, this albino demon resembles a desiccated, hairless wolf. Its claws are massively oversized and armoured in jet-black soulbound gauntlets, which match its black breastplate. The demon is always accompanied by at least three embodied soul guardians.



Courtier

(8th level Haimon Deceiver)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 12d8–12 (42 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 23 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +10 soulshaped armour), touch 11, flat-footed 22

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+12

Attack: Claw +12 melee (1d4) or soulbound pistol +15 ranged (2d4+2d6 cold)

Attack: Claw +12 melee (1d4) or soulbound pistol +15/+10 ranged (2d4+2d6 cold)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +10

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 17

Skills: Bluff +14, Craft (hellfire) +11, Craft (soulshape) +10, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +20, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (law) +10,

Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +15, Listen +12, Sense Motive +16

Feats: Great Fortitude, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Skill Focus (Craft (hellfire)), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge (nobility & royalty))

Mutations:

⊗ **Haimon:** Cold as the Dead (+4 to resist Influence attempts), Soulshape

⊗ **Deceiver:** Fell Insight (+4 to Diplomacy and Sense Motive), Possession (5 iliaster/possession)

⊗ **Vitality:** Unnatural Health (+1 hp/level)

⊗ **Lies:** Liar's Gift (2 iliaster/+2 Bluff or Diplomacy), Hypnotic Speech (3 iliaster gives a target a –5 penalty to Concentration or Sense Motive if they fail a Will save (DC 19))

⊗ **Hellfire Mastery:** Create Hellfire (5 iliaster/blast of hellfire)

Iliaster Reserve: 19

Challenge Rating: 8

Equipment: Soulshaped armour, soulbound pistol (+2 to hit, +2d6 cold damage)

'If you send Slavers to the Gorge of Salt soulfields, then we shall march a hundred thousand Legionnaires into your estates and slaughter every thing dwelling therein. We shall raze your fortresses and take your souls. This is not a threat; it is as certain as the grave.'

This female courtier has skin pale as midnight and dresses in old-fashioned velvet robes.

The starched courtiers of House Haimon are justly feared; they are exceedingly difficult to sway in an argument and care nothing for the usual bribes and indulgences that other demon politicians use to make alliances. The Haimon may sit outside most debates and arguments in Pandemonium, but they are a constant cold presence distrusted by the other Houses.

This diplomat has her protections; not only does she wear fine soulshaped armour to show off the wealth of her House, but she also has two secret weapons, a soulbound pistol from the mortal world and the power to call up white spheres of burning hellfire.

Of House Lictat

The demons of House Lictat are in the main less powerful than those of other Houses, but they make up for this lack by a willingness to do what others will not and an all-consuming and heedless ambition.

Trader

(2nd level Lictat Stalker)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+1

Attack: Bite +1 melee (1d6-1) or shortsword +1 melee (1d6-1/19-20 plus poison)

Attack: Bite +1 melee (1d6-1) and claw -4 melee (1d4-1) or shortsword +1 melee (1d6-1/19-20 plus poison) and claw -4 melee (1d4-1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +3, Bluff +3, Gather Information +3, Handle Spawn +4, Ride +3, Sense Motive +4, Survival +5

Feats: Mounted Combat, Spirited Charge

Mutations:

⊗ **Stalker:** Scent

⊗ **Venoms:** Venom Immunity (+4 to saves against poison)

Iliaster Reserve: 8

Challenge Rating: 2

Equipment: Poisoned shortsword (scorpion poison), riding spawn

'Can I interest you in a hideous, painful death involving liquidated bowels?'

This demon resembles a skinned horse, carrying a small mountain of supplies.

This demon has carved out a niche for itself as a weapon salesman to the isolated strongholds of the Second Circle. It sells poisons and other products of the Glabretch estates to Haimon and Oblurott warlords too proud to deal with the diseased ones. The demon is mounted upon a riding spawn, which it intends to bond with using the Chain of the Mount as soon as it has the power to spare.

Warrior (9th level Lictat Fiend)

Large Demon

Hit Dice: 9d10+9 (58 hp)

Initiative: +8

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Armour Class: 19 (-2 size, +4 Dex, +7 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+16

Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+3) or living gun +12 ranged (1d6)

Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+3) or living gun +12/+7 ranged (1d6)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +4

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Craft (hellfire) +11, Spot +13, Tumble +16, Warcraft +12

Feats: Double Tap, Far Shot, Hover, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot

Mutations:

⊗ **Fiend:** Wings, Hellfire Bomb (3 iliaster/hellfire), Improved Flight

⊗ **Charisma:** Dangerous Beauty (1 iliaster/+2 to Seduction or Diplomacy),

⊗ **Living Weapons:** Weapon Growth (gun, costs 1 hp/shot), Deadly Strike (1 iliaster/+1 hit or +2 to damage), Gore Cannon (1 iliaster/X hit points: increase damage by X), Control Weapon (3 iliaster/retract or enlarge weapon)

⊗ **Insect Aspect:** Chitin Armour (+4 AC)

Iliaster Reserve: 25

Challenge Rating: 9

Equipment: Two flasks of Agony, implanted iliaster reserve (10 points)

'It's true that we're not famed for our diplomacy, but dismiss us as a minor House and I'll destroy you.'

This winged horror is armoured in insect-like plates. Its right arm resembles a nightmare of cannons and death.

A feared assassin of House Lictat, this fiend's whole right arm has transformed into a gun made of bone and boiling blood. It prefers to snipe at its enemies from far above, blasting them with a single gore shot. Seeing as it can inflict over a hundred points of damage with a fully charged burst, it has failed few assassination attempts.

Of House Oblurott

The bloated monsters of House Oblurott have an unerring ability to find places where they can thrive and wax even fatter. No Oblurott ever goes hungry for long.

Slave-Driver

(5th level Oblurott Slaver)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (32 hp)

Initiative: -1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 24 (−1 Dex, +3 natural, +8 iron plate, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 9, flat-footed 24

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+5

Attack: Soulbound spear +7 melee (1d8+2)

Full Attack: Soulbound spear +7 melee (1d8+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +2

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14

Skills: Craft (engines) +10, Craft (soulshape) +10, Handle Spawn +9, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (engineering) +8, Search +10, Torture +9

Feats: Extra Skill (Craft (engines)), Martial Weapons, Weapon Focus (bite)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Slaver:** Soulshape
- ⊗ **Oblurott:** Gross Flesh (DR 5/Slashing)
- ⊗ **Intelligence:** Cunning Intellect (+2 to all Knowledges)
- ⊗ **Machine Aspect:** Body of Iron (Can be repaired with Craft), Tireless Engine

Iliaster Reserve: 10

Challenge Rating: 5

Equipment: Iron plate armour, facemask, heavy shield, soulbound spear (+2 hit, +2 damage)

'On, you scum! Onwards!'

This barrel-chested slaver is obviously mechanical; it still has a layer of grotesque flesh around its body, but it is held in place by chicken-wire instead of skin.

Once a fairly typical member of House Oblurott, this demon has literally become an eating machine. Its body has become increasingly mechanical until it is impossible to tell where the iron armour stops and the demon begins. It has sought out damned souls with a knack for ironworking and engineering and has put them to work in its fortress to repair it should it be damaged.

Despite being wholly mechanical, the demon still eats just as much as any of its cousins; its mouth has been replaced by a massive grinder that chews up its meat.

Monster

(20th level Oblurott Stalker)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 20d8+60 (150 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 25 (−2 Dex, +3 natural, +10

iron plate, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 8, flat-footed 25

Base Attack/Grapple: +20/+20

Attack: Executioner's axe +25 (2d6+2 plus 2d6 fire)

Full Attack: Executioner's axe +25/+20/+15/+10 (2d6+2 plus 2d6 fire)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +15, Ref +10, Will +6

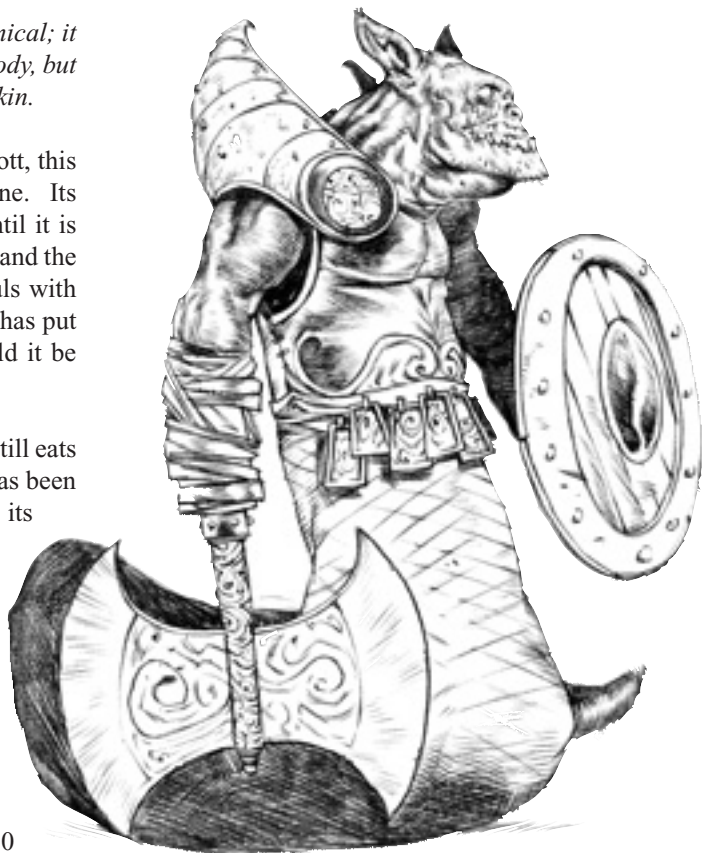
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 6, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14

Skills: Diplomacy +17, Handle Spawn +20, Intimidate +25, Listen +16, Spot +23, Survival +23, Warcraft +22

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon (executioner's axe), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (axe), Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Specialisation (axe)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Oblurott:** Gross Flesh (DR 5/Slashing), Metabolism Control (2 iliaster/+4 to Fortitude save), Excess Growth (5 iliaster/Fortitude save (DC 23) to avoid ageing one day), Insatiable Hunger (all within 30 feet suffer a −2 to all rolls), Oblurott's Hunger (7 iliaster/Will save (DC 22) or eat until Will save is successful)
- ⊗ **Stalker:** Scent, Swift Movement, Shadow Dreams (3 iliaster/force Will save to avoid fatigue)
- ⊗ **Thunderbolt:** Bones of Iron (Electrical Resistance)



10)

- ⊗ **Winged:** Wings (1 iliaster to extend, Poor manoeuvrability, speed equals base speed)
- ⊗ **Nightmare Aspect:** Horror of Horrors (Those who see the demon must make a Will save (DC 22) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to attacks), Nightmare Walk (5 iliaster to teleport to anyone scared of demon), Nightmare Form (1 iliaster to bypass damage resistance)
- ⊗ **Weeping:** Crocodile Tears (3 iliaster; -4 to resistance against Grovelling or Seduction), Burning Eyes (1 iliaster/round – one target suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls)
- ⊗ **Corrosion:** Acid Resistance 10, Acid Vomit (1 iliaster/1d6 points of acid damage touch attack), Acid Spit (Str x5 in feet range for vomit attack), Enhanced Acid (boost acid damage)
- ⊗ **Bonded Weapons:** Bonded Weapon

Iliaster Reserve: 28**Challenge Rating:** 20**Equipment:** Iron plate armour, facemask, heavy shield, soulbound bonded axe (+4 to hit, flaming)

'You're interrupting my meal. That makes you dessert.'

You can barely look upon this horror. Its features seem to shift and change as you watch them.

A proud feaster of House Oblurott, this stalker resembles a sinuous snake. A massive axe is bonded to one arm, while acid tears stream constantly from its overlarge eyes. The creature's most overpowering feature, however, is its aura of terror – anyone approaching the creature is distracted by hunger, terror and watering eyes, making the demon almost unassailable.

Of House Riethii

The courtesans and playthings of House Riethii wield great influence in the Lower Circles, but any who dismiss those of the House of the Rose as mere social butterflies will soon discover that the rose has thorns.

Spy

(7th level Riethii Succubus)

Medium Demon**Hit Dice:** 7d8 (31 hp)**Initiative:** +5**Speed:** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Armour Class:** 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12**Base Attack/Grapple:** +7/+6**Attack:** Claw +6 melee (1d6-1)**Full Attack:** Claw +6/+1 melee (1d6-1)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +6**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16**Skills:** Bluff +15, Disguise +13, Diplomacy +13, Perform (dance) +15, Seduction +27, Spot +11**Feats:** Dodge, Iliaster Reserve, Improved Initiative, Related Knowledge (Perform and Bluff)**Mutations:**⊗ **Malcubi:** Allure (+4 to Seduction, +2 to Diplomacy & Grovel)⊗ **Riethii:** Demonic Allure (+4 to Seduction)⊗ **Inferno:** Fire Resistance 10⊗ **Chain of Man:** Of Mortal Form (5 iliaster to take human form)⊗ **Lust:** Seductive Form (+4 to Seduction)**Iliaster Reserve:** 13**Challenge Rating:** 7**Equipment:** None

'I, a demon? That's foolish talk – you're exhausted and not thinking straight. Come to bed.'

You see a slave girl, dressed in a few rags and little else. Despite her desperate state, her eyes still flash with spirit and defiance.

Despite her inhuman desirability, this succubus' ability to transform herself into a mortal is what makes her truly valuable to her kin. The other Houses are well aware of the allure of the Riethii and take steps to ensure that a Riethii malcubus never gets close enough to seduce another demon. This succubus, however, can disguise herself as an innocent mortal girl, only revealing her full damning glory when her target is vulnerable.

Courtier

(10th level Riethii Imp)

Small Demon**Hit Dice:** 10d6 (35 hp)**Initiative:** +1**Speed:** 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)**Armour Class:** 15 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13**Base Attack/Grapple:** +10/+5**Attack:** Claw +10 melee (1d4)**Full Attack:** Claw +10 melee (1d4)**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +9**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 13**Skills:** Bluff +10, Climb +9, Concentration +8,

Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +9, Hide +16, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Seduction +7, Sense Motive +10, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Related Knowledge (Hide and Move Silently)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Imp:** Wings, Shrink (2 iliaster/become Diminutive), Suggestion (3 iliaster/Will save (DC 16) or follow imp's advice), Improved Shrink (4 iliaster/become Fine), Possession
- ⊗ **Riethii:** Demonic Allure (+4 Seduction), Sweet-Smelling Vapours (3 iliaster/Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer a -2 to Will saves & Concentration)
- ⊗ **Hydra:** Extra Head (+2 Spot)
- ⊗ **Spider:** Shape of the Spider (+10 to Climb)
- ⊗ **Horns:** Horn Growth (+1 AC, +2 Diplomacy)

Iliaster Reserve: 16

Challenge Rating: 30

Equipment: None

'Blackmail is such an accurate term.'

This creature looks bizarrely like an ugly cherub.

A possessor imp, this courtier dresses in loose shifts and robes that can easily be discarded. It serves as both a diplomat and a spy, flitting in and out of keyholes or into the minds of others.

Of House Sturrach

Guard

(2nd Level Sturrach Hulk)

Large Demon

Hit Dice: 2d12+8 (21 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 24 (-1 size, +6 natural, +5 chain, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 9, flat-footed 24

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+10

Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d8+4) and bite +0 melee (1d10+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +0, Will -1

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +11

Feats: Power Attack, Martial Weapons Proficiency

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Sturrach:** Warrior's Horns (+2 AC)
- ⊗ **Usury:** Brand of Usury

Iliaster Reserve: 8

Challenge Rating: 2

Equipment: Chainmail, heavy shield, facemask

'Kneel before me, or I'll drive you to your knees and cut off your head.'

A guard hulk in chain mail stands at the gate. Its muscular bulk and huge claws block all passage through the portal.

A low-ranking guard, this hulk has the unusual mutation of Usury, which permits it to brand creatures who owe it a debt. To ensure security, it extracts a minor boon from all those who pass by the gate it guards; if anyone within the fortress does not have the brand caused by the boon, it is obvious they are intruders.

General

(20th level Sturrach Fiend)

Large Demon

Hit Dice: 20d10 (110 hp)

Initiative: +8

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 70 ft. (good)

Armour Class: 19 (-2 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural, +2 spawnleather, +2 facemask), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +20/+25

Attack: Claw +24 melee (1d10+3)

Full Attack: Claw +24 melee (1d10+3) and bite +20 melee (1d8)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +16, Will +6

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14

Skills: Craft (hellfire) +23, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (infernography) +14, Intimidate +23, Sense Motive +15, Spot +23, Tumble +16, Warcraft +23

Feats: Endurance, Fly-by Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus (hellfire bomb), Weapon Finesse (claw), Weapon Specialisation (claw)

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Sturrach:** Warrior's Horns (+2 AC), Combat Gland (1 iliaster per round for +2 to attacks), Taste for Blood (heal 1d4 after inflicting damage)
- ⊗ **Fiend:** Wings, Hellfire Bomb (3 iliaster/sphere), Improved Flight, Hellfire Breath (5 iliaster/Reflex save, DC 24 to avoid)
- ⊗ **Devourer:** Monstrous Maw, Swallow Anything
- ⊗ **Inferno:** Fire Resistance 10
- ⊗ **Swift:** Swift Movement (Flying speed +10)
- ⊗ **Charisma:** Dangerous Beauty (1 iliaster/+2 to Seduction or Diplomacy)
- ⊗ **Mount:** Domination of the Mount, Psychic Control

(1 iliaster/command, 5 iliaster/possession)

- ⊗ **Wrath:** Wrath Strike (2 iliaster/+1 to all attacks), Iliaster blast (2 iliaster/+1 damage), Carnage (drop a foe, regain 2d6 iliaster), Hellfire God (Use Strength instead of Charisma for Craft (hellfire)), Greater Carnage (regain 2d6 iliaster if anyone drops with 30 feet)
 - ⊗ **Trumpet:** Brass Lungs (double Constitution for holding breath)
- Iliaster Reserve:** 28
Challenge Rating: 20
Equipment: Facemask, spawnleather armour

'Kill them all!'

A magnificent yet terrifying fiend soars above the battlefield. Two massive horns hang from its forehead. A great brass trumpet grows from one wrist, while its other arm ends in a bloodstained claw.

This proud general of the Sturrach armies rides a specially designed gauntflyer. It prefers to remain high above the battlefield, raining down hellfire, then swooping in to collect iliaster from the dying. It eschews weapons and armour in favour of its own demonic agility.

Of House Zethu

Unsurprisingly, House Zethu demons are always heavily equipped with the latest in demonic weaponry.

Technician

(4th level Zethu Artificer)

Small Demon

Hit Dice: 4d6+4 (18 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural, +2 heavy shield, +2 facemask), touch 13, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+0

Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d4) or shattergun +8 ranged (2d8)

Full Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d4) or shattergun +8 ranged (2d8)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 8

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (weapons & armour) +9, Craft (engineering) +9, Drive +9, Grovel +6, Listen +9, Spot +9, Sorcery +9

Feats: Double Tap, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shattergun), Point Blank Shot

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Zethu:** Demonic Insight (Take 15 on evil thoughts), Boost (Boost Weapon (piercing))
- ⊗ **Bonded Weapon:** Bonded Weapon (+1 to attacks with shattergun), Flesh of my Flesh (3 iliaster/reload)

Iliaster Reserve: 10

Challenge Rating: 4

Equipment: Facemask, heavy shield, engineering tools

Rituals Known: *Binding I, summoning I, warding I, counterspell, discern magic, psychic defence, ritual preparation*

'It'll work now. I've fixed it. Trust me.'

This demon looks like a heavily armoured mushroom. The humorous effect is diminished by the nasty looking bile rifle it wields.

This technician has had one arm merged with its bile rifle; a claw sprouts from the end of the weapon, while a shield hangs from its back. It scurries through the shadowy recesses of the Zethu factories, maintaining the facilities and studying the magical runes that form the terrible intent of the machine.

Mobile Fortress

(12th level Zethu Hulk)

Gargantuan Demon

Hit Dice: 12d12+60 (138 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 24 (−4 size, +11 natural, +5 chain, +2 facemask), touch 6, flat-footed 24

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+37

Attack: Claw +17 melee (3d6+9)

Full Attack: Claw +17 melee (3d6+9) or 4 Large shatterguns +3 ranged (3d8)

Space/Reach: 20 ft./20 ft.

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 11, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +10, Spot +3

Feats: Awesome Blow, Burst Fire, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shattergun), Improved Bull Rush, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack,

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Hulk:** Rage (5 iliaster/rage), Size Increase, Armour (+3), Size Increase
- ⊗ **Nightmare Aspect:** Horror of Horrors (Will save (DC 16) or suffer a −2 morale penalty to attacks),
- ⊗ **Living Fortress:** Stone Armour (+4 AC), Towers and Battlements (Secondary Weapons)
- ⊗ **Winged:** Wings (4 iliaster/flight)

- ⊗ **Monstrous Strength:** Brute Force (1½ Strength for breaking), Hellish Grip (+4 grapple), The Brute (+4 Strength), Unholy Strength (1 iliaster/+1 Strength)

Iliaster Reserve: 20

Challenge Rating: 12

Equipment: Facemask, chain armour, 4 mounted shatterguns

'DESTROY NOW?'

It is hard to tell if this is a demon or a war machine. Its flesh is made of stone blocks; chain armour hangs from rings embedded into the rock. Gun muzzles poke from the towers and bunkers on its shoulders.

This gargantuan demon is covered with armour and fortifications. Its shoulders resemble bunkers packed with shatterguns, while its strength is more than sufficient to carry the small castle on its back over the uneven terrain of the Infernum. Sadly, it is rather brainless, leading its Zethu masters to consider installing a second brain to guide the hulk.

Mercenaries

Mercenary bands are found throughout the Pit, trading their services for iliaster from the Houses. Being a mercenary is the only option for many demons, and even mortals or angels can join the brotherhood of hired swords and find some small level of acceptance.

Mercenary Warrior (2nd level Mercenary Fiend)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 2d10 (11 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (average)

Armour Class: 22 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +2 spawnleather, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 13, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+4

Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d8+2) or bile rifle +5 ranged (1d4)

Full Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d8+2) or bile rifle +5 ranged (1d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Craft (hellfire) +3, Craft (weapons & armour) +4, Listen +5, Spot +5, Warcraft +4

Feats: Dodge, Martial Weapons Proficiency

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Fiend:** Wings

- ⊗ **Hungry Mind:** Devouring Thoughts (1 iliaster/Will save (DC 10 or fiend can read thoughts for 1d6 rounds).

Iliaster Reserve: 8

Challenge Rating: 2

Equipment: Facemask, heavy shield, spawnleather armour, bile rifle, 7 points of bottled iliaster

'Two coppers a kill, milord. Just two coppers a kill. Can't stay fairer than that.'

A well-equipped young demon, this cunning fiend has the mutation of the hungry mind, which it uses to anticipate the actions of enemies in combat. Physically, it looks like the classic image of a fiend, if rather spindly compared the massive warriors of the House legions. It carries a salvaged bile rifle.

Commander (9th level Mercenary Stalker)

Medium Demon

Hit Dice: 9d8+9 (49 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 24 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +6 shuckedskin, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 11, flat-footed 23

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+11

Attack: Cleaver +11 melee (1d8+2) or light crossbow +11 ranged (1d8)

Full Attack: Cleaver +11/+6 melee (1d8+2) or light crossbow +11/+6 ranged (1d8)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +7, Grovel +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (infernography) +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Survival +5, Torture +11, Warcraft +7

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Point-Black Shot, Power Attack

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Stalker:** Scent, Swift Movement, Shadow Dreams (3 iliaster/Will save to avoid fatigue)

- ⊗ **Living Weapons:** Weapon Growth (Cleaver), Deadly Strike (1 iliaster/+1 to hit or +2 to damage)

- ⊗ **Bonded Weapons:** Bonded Weapon (Crossbow)

- ⊗ **Torment:** Barbs and Hooks of Bone (+1d4 bite and claw damage, +4 Torture), Living Rack (torture and extraction rig), Constant Torment (torture as a free action)

Iliaster Reserve: 8**Challenge Rating: 9**

Equipment: Facemask, heavy shield, shuckedskin armour, 10 points of bottled iliaster

'Quick or dead, demon or angel – if you can hold a sword, follow an order and call me master, I've a place for you.'

A commander of a small mercenary brigade, this stalker has merged with its equipment. Both arms now end in weapons, while its back has transformed into a rack, on which it keeps a damned soul. A pulsing tube runs from the extraction rig into the back of the demon's neck, feeding it with fresh iliaster.

Independent or Free Demons

Low-ranking demons who have rejected the Covenants of their masters are found in the heretical Free Cities, while independent demons outside the direct control or protection of the Houses are the backbone of the hellish society.

Merchant**(5th level Independent Imp)****Small Demon**

Hit Dice: 5d6–5 (12 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 20 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (average)

Armour Class: 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/–1

Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d4–2) or shortbow +9 ranged (1d6)

Full Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d4–2) or shortbow +9 ranged (1d6)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +7, Will +7

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +6, Grovel +6, Hide +12, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Sense Motive +8

Feats: Fly-by Attack, Hover, Skill Focus (Appraise)

Mutations:

⊗ **Imp:** Wings, Shrink (2 iliaster/Diminutive), Suggestion

⊗ **Crawling Flesh:** Crawling Flesh (+1 AC)

⊗ **Ice Waste:** Cold Resistance 10

Iliaster Reserve: 11

Challenge Rating: 5

Equipment: Trade goods

A merchant imp who flits between cities on the Sixth Circle, this demon is in good standing in both the Houses and the Free Cities. It accomplishes this mainly by grovelling and accepting Covenants with both sides.

Preacher**(13th level Artificer)****Small Demon**

Hit Dice: 13d6+13 (58 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 20 (+1 size, +9 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +13/+8

Attack: Shortsword +13 melee (1d6–1) or spite +14 ranged (1d6+4)

Full Attack: 2 shortsword +13/+8/+3 melee and +8 melee (1d6–1) or spite +14/+9/+4 ranged and +9 ranged (1d6+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +10

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 18

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +23, Handle Spawn +15, Knowledge (law) +13, Knowledge (inferigraphy) +16, Perform +20, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +11, Spot+13, Torture +13

Feats: Hover, Iliaster Reserve, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Perform)

Mutations:

⊗ **Artificer:** Machine Empathy, Improved Armour (AC +3), Remote Control (1 iliaster/control device), Improved Armour (AC +3)

⊗ **Wrath:** Wrath Strike (1 iliaster/+1 to all attacks)

⊗ **Horns:** Horn Growth (+1 AC, +2 Diplomacy)

⊗ **Usury:** Brand of Ownership (1 iliaster/brand)

⊗ **Myriad Limbs:** Extra Limb, Strengthen Limb

⊗ **Form:** Travel Form (**Winged:** Wings, Improved Flight, Greater Flight, **Swift:** Swift Movement, **Wandering Eyes:** Extra Eye, **Living Armour:** Armoured Carapace, **Torment:** Barbs and Hooks of Bone, **Alternate Form:** Human Form (**Man:** Of Mortal Form, **Lies:** Liar's Gift, **Monstrous Strength:** Brute Force, **Hydra:** Extra Head, **Swift:** Swift Movement)

⊗ **Devourer:** Monstrous Maw (increased bite damage)

⊗ **Lies:** Liar's Gift (1 iliaster/+2 Bluff or Diplomacy), Hypnotic Speech (3 iliaster/target must make a Will save when demon is making a Bluff or Diplomacy check; if failed, the target suffers a –5 penalty to

Why, this is all the rage in Pandemonium...

Concentration checks)

Iliaster Reserve: 21

Challenge Rating: 13

Equipment: Satchel of Spite, Thieves' Tools, twin shortwords, screamer kit

Brothers! Throw off your chains! The Lords of the Houses will keep you in bondage forever! You shall never take their thrones through slavery! Victory shall only come through the Breaking of Oaths!

A squat little artificer might seem to be an unlikely spokesman for the cause of the Free Cities, but this demon's mutation set makes it an ideal preacher. It has two alternate forms; it can turn itself into a three-eyed, winged worm covered in articulated, spiked plates, and it can move from that form into that of a horribly mutated two-headed human. By shifting between these forms, the demon can throw off its pursuers. It visits places where demons are trapped in binding Covenants and offers them the freedom of the Breaking of Oaths.

Half-Demons

Certain demon breeds – notably the malcubi – can sire or bear children that are half-mortal, or that incorporate traits from two breeds of demon and mortals. These half-demons are not as powerful as their sires, but they can produce iliaster for themselves instead of having to torture souls for power. Even the offspring of two demons has this mortal trait, as the ability to breed in this fashion requires mortal blood or seed somewhere in the demon's heritage. Both form of malcubi have the vile ability to steal ova or semen from a mortal partner and use it to breed half-demons later in life.

Half-demons occupy an uncertain niche in Infernal society. On the one hand, the Infernum rewards power and victory, not accident of birth. A mortal, angel or even a damned soul of sufficient ambition and ruthlessness can ascend to even the throne of a House – such a meteoric and defiant ascension is exceedingly difficult and rare, but it is permissible.

Half-demons should have an even easier course – they are not vermin like mortals or slaves like the dead, they are but a single step removed from full demonhood. Perhaps it is this closeness that makes half-demons specially hated by their full-demon brethren, the sense that the half-demon is a definite threat that must be destroyed. The parental bond is also very unsettling to demons; while a succubus might prize her child highly for more than its usefulness to her

plans, other demons find such a link incomprehensible to the orphan race of the hellkin.

The half-demons are therefore subtly hated and feared by most full-demons. This malice is by no means as overt as the disdain demons feel for the damned or even for demons of other Houses; it is a quiet overture to backstabbing. Half-demons are the unpopular golden children of the Houses.

Half-Demon Base State

- ⊗ Half-demons are similar to mortals – they age, breathe, sleep, eat and so on.
- ⊗ They count as demons for the purposes of Sorcery and Covenants. They can hold and owe debts, be summoned and so on.
- ⊗ Half-demons begin with a Corruption of 10+1d10.
- ⊗ A half-demon begins with a Covenant of Strength 20 towards its demonic parent (if both its parents are demons, then the Covenant goes to the mother).
- ⊗ A half-demon can generate iliaster just like a mortal. They can spend it to stabilise, activate boost feats, and boost their own dice rolls and damage, but cannot penalise the rolls of others or alter fate.
- ⊗ A half-demon is dying when reduced below 0 hit points, not Breached.
- ⊗ A half-demon must spend iliaster each day equal to half its level, rounded down, or become Dissolute just like a demon.
- ⊗ A half-demon has an iliaster reserve equal to his level plus his Constitution bonus.
- ⊗ Like mortals, half-demons can choose their Base Attack, Saving Throw, Feat, Skill and Hit Point progressions. Unlike mortals, half-demons have only one good progression; they have two average and two poor progressions.
- ⊗ A half-demon can always take the Extra Mutation feat without any limits on Corruption. It can take the Breed and House mutations of its demonic parent(s). If it takes a chosen mutation, then its next mutation is a random mutation.
- ⊗ Half-demons begin with two feats and the bonus feat granted by their demonic background, if any.
- ⊗ Physically, half-demons are obviously a cross-breed between a particular demonic breed and a mortal. Until the half-demon's mutations begin to develop though, these physical traits are purely cosmetic; a half-demon does not begin with any natural weapons or armour.
- ⊗ Half-demons have a +2 racial bonus to any ability score, so long as one of their demonic parents has a racial bonus to that ability score.

Half-Succubus of House Riethii

Half-Demon Pregnancies

A half-demon quickens swiftly in the womb; the child comes to term in 1d12 weeks and grows to maturity within six years (half-demons grow between two and three times faster than humans until they reach their full growth). Such an unnatural child is difficult for succubi or female deceivers to bear, and exceedingly dangerous for humans. For the duration of the pregnancy, the growing foetus needs (1d4 + 1 per week of the pregnancy) iliaster from the mother. If the demon cannot provide this iliaster, the mother can enter Dissolution. A mortal mother unable to nourish the monster growing within her suffers one point of Constitution drain for every point of iliaster she fails to provide.

The birth itself is also dangerous; the child inflicts 3d6 points of damage to the mother. A Heal check (DC 15) by an attending surgeon halves this damage.

(5th level Half-Demon)

Medium Mortal/Demon Hybrid

Progressions: Good Feats, Average Skills and Saving Throws, Poor Base Attack and Hit Points

Hit Dice: 5d6-5 (12 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (+2 Dex, +2 spawnleather), touch 12, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+2

Attack: Dagger +2 melee (1d4)

Full Attack: Dagger +2 melee (1d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +5

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 18

Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +12, Seduction +16, Sense Motive +7, Swim +8

Feats: Extra Mutation x 4, Related Knowledge (Bluff and Sense Motive), Simple Weapons Proficiency

Corruption: 19

Max Iliaster/Round: 3

Iliaster Reserve: 4

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Riethii:** Demonic Allure (+4 Seduction), Sweet-Smelling Vapours (3 iliaster/Fortitude save (DC 11) or suffer a -2 to Will saves & Concentration), Endurance (tireless), Drain Strength (2 iliaster & touch/target must make a Fortitude save (DC 11) or lose 1d6 strength or iliaster, demon gains equal iliaster)

- ⊗ **Form:** Alternate Form (5 iliaster/**Seas:** Shape of the Seabeast, **Hellfire Mastery:** Create Hellfire)

Challenge Rating: 5

Equipment: Dagger, spawnleather armour

This is a family business.

This daughter of House Riethii has been sent to the Port of Despair to oversee her succubus mother's business interests in that city. She appears to be a beautiful but not unnatural mortal, showing no visible signs of her demonic heritage. She prefers to use her wiles and cunning to defeat opponents rather than fight them, and uses her gilled merform to flee if attacked.

Half-



Hulk of House Sturrach (10th level Half-Demon)

Huge Mortal/Demon Hybrid

Progressions: Good Hit Points, Average Base Attack Bonus and Saving Throws, Poor Feats and Skills

Hit Dice: 10d12+20 (85 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 25 (−2 size, +5 natural, +8 iron plate, +2 shield, +2 facemask), touch 8, flat-footed 25

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+21

Attack: Warhammer +11 melee (3d6+6)

Full Attack: Warhammer +11/+6 melee (3d6+6)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +8

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Handle Spawn +8, Intimidate +12, Ride +15, Warcraft +13

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Mounted Combat, Power Attack

Corruption: 18

Max Iliaster/Round: 6

Iliaster Reserve: 10

Mutations:

⊗ **Hulk:** Rage, Size Increase, Armour (+3 AC), Increase

⊗ **Sturrach:** Warrior's Horns (+2 AC), Combat Gland (1 iliaster per round for +2 to attacks)

Challenge Rating: 10

Equipment: Huge warhammer, light shield, facemask, iron plate armour, Huge war-spawn

'FLEE BEFORE MY WRATH, PUNY ONES!'

An infamous giant of House Sturrach, this mortal has grown to titanic size. He rides a specially bred war-spawn gorged on Agony and hellbroths and armoured in hellish steel. The giant delights only in battle and has no ambition beyond the kill. The Early tribes fear his cruel assaults and call him Gog after a giant of legend.

Beast/Succubus Hybrid (4th level Crossbreed)

Medium Demon Hybrid

Progressions: Good Skills, Average Base Attack Bonus and Feats, Poor Saving Throws and Hit Points

Hit Dice: 4d6+8 (22 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed +12

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3

Attack: Claw +3 melee (1d4)

Full Attack: Claw +3 melee (1d4) and bite −2 melee (1d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +7, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +10, Spot +8, Survival +6, Tumble +10

Feats: Extra Mutation x 5

Corruption: 11

Max Iliaster/Round: 3

Iliaster Reserve: 6

Mutations:

⊗ **Animal Aspect:** Face of the Beast (1d4 Bite

Attack, +2 Listen and Spot), Hide of the Beast (+2 AC, Cold Resistance 10), Form of the Beast (3 iliaster/transform into cat)

⊗ **Nightmare Aspect:** Horror of Horrors (Will save (DC 13) or suffer a −2 penalty to attacks against the demon)

⊗ **Claws:** Claws

Challenge Rating: 4

'They don't want me? Fine. I'll hunt them as they hunted me...'

An unwanted bastard daughter of an unlikely liaison between a succubus and a beast, this feral hybrid resembles a humanoid cat. She has managed to survive and fled to Upper Hell. She is too tainted by her demonic heritage to become part of one of the Early tribes, but has an uneasy alliance with a group of Branded – they supply her with food and drink for her mortal needs, while she protects them from demonic stalkers.

Mortals

See *Book of the Damned* for the mortal base state.

Warrior of the Bori Tribe (10th level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack, Average Saving Throws and Feats, Poor Skills

Hit Dice: 10d12+30 (95 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 25 ft. (5 squares)

Armour Class: 16 (+6 sinsuit), touch 10, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+12

Attack: Greatsword +13 melee (2d6+5 (plus 2d6 holy when activated))

Full Attack: Greatsword +13/+8 melee (2d6+5 (plus 2d6 holy when activated))

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +8

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +1, Concentration +4, Spot +5, Survival +5

Feats: Boost Armour (fire resistance), Boost Weapon (holy), Cleave, Dodge, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialisation (greatsword)

Corruption: 10

Challenge Rating: 10

Equipment: Sinsuit, greatsword

'When I die, my soul may kneel to some demon Lord. But not while I breathe.'

A warrior of the Bori tribe, this barbarian wears a sinsuit to protect him from the tainted environments of the Lower Infernum. His massive greatsword has cleaved through dozens of demons and he keeps their fangs on a chain around his neck.

In combat, the warrior channels iliaster into his blade and armour and attacks as furiously as possible.

Branded Survivor (3rd level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Skills and Feats, Average Hit Points and Saving Throws, Poor Base Attack

Hit Dice: 3d8-3 (10 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 35 ft. (7 squares)

Armour Class: 19 (+2 Dex, +5 chain, +1 shield, +1 helmet), touch 12, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3

Attack: Club +3 melee (1d4+2)

Full Attack: Club +3 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13

Skills: Craft (weapons & armour) +6, Concentration +6, Grovel +6, Hide +8, Spot +7, Survival +7

Feats: Endurance, Extra Mutation, Improved Initiative, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Skill Focus (Craft (weapons & armour))

Corruption: 11

Mutations:

⊗ **Darkness:** Demon Sight (1 iliaster/ten minutes, darkvision)

⊗ **Swiftess:** Swift Movement

Challenge Rating: 3

Equipment: Chainmail, light shield, light helmet, club

'There's safety somewhere. They told me so.'

A refugee from the work-pits of the Lower Circles, this mortal has heard of the free tribes of the Branded and has made her way up the Pit. She wears armour and weapons cobbled together from scrap metal and stolen parts, but tries to avoid contact with demon patrols by travelling at night, relying on her demonic ability to see in the dark.

Demon Servant

(5th level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Hit Points and Base Attack, Average Feats and Skills, Poor Saving Throws

Hit Dice: 5d12+10 (42 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 26 (+4 natural, +8 iron plate, +2 facemask, +2 shield), touch 10, flat-footed 26

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+7

Attack: Longsword +8 melee (1d8+2)

Full Attack: Longsword +8 melee (1d8+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Concentration +10, Craft (hellfire) +12, Grovel +7, Spot +9

Feats: Extra Mutation x 4, Skill Focus (Craft (hellfire))

Corruption: 15

Max Iliaster/Round: 3

Mutations:

- ⊗ **Hellfire Mastery:** Create Hellfire (5 iliaster/sphere), Hellfire Arc (5 iliaster +2 per extra target), Hellfire Artistry (+2 Craft (hellfire)), Hellfire Blast (7 iliaster/20' wide)

- ⊗ **Bonded Weapon:** Bonded Weapon (sword)

- ⊗ **Living Fortress:** Stone Armour (+4 AC)

Challenge Rating: 5

Equipment: Iron plate armour, facemask, heavy shield

'Burn! Ahahahahaha! Burn!'

This wretch's humanity has long since been left behind. Her soul has been transmuted into hellfire; flames burn in her eye sockets. She wears a scorched suit of iron plate mail and carries a heavy shield. She is utterly bound to her demonic masters and wields her hellfire as they command.

Faustian (20th level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Saving Throws and Skills, Average Feats and Hit Points, Poor Base Attack

Hit Dice: 20d8+20 (110 hp)

Initiative: -1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 facemask), touch 9, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+9

Attack: Dagger +9 (1d4-1)

Full Attack: Dagger +9/+4 (1d4-1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +17

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +22, Craft (fortresses) +12, Craft (script) +12, Craft (hellfire) +8, Craft (engineering) +8, Concentration +24, Decipher Script +24, Diplomacy +22, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +20, Knowledge (theology) +25, Sorcery +25, Torture +22

Feats: Diehard, Endurance, Extra Mutation, Extra Skill (Bluff), Extra Skill (Diplomacy), Extra Skill (Torture), Iliaster Font, Iliaster Reserve x 4, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana)), Skill Focus (Sorcery)

Corruption: 18

Max Iliaster/Round: 11

Iliaster Reserve: 8

Mutations:



- ⊗ **Thunderbolt:** Iron Bones (Electrical Resistance 10)

- ⊗ **Intelligence:** Cunning Intellect

- ⊗ **Lies:** Liar's Gift (1 iliaster/+2 Bluff or Diplomacy)

- ⊗ **Monstrous Strength:** Brute Force (1½ times Strength for breaking)

Challenge Rating: 20

Equipment: Sorcerer's tools and robes sufficient to cast all her spells without penalty, dagger.

Rituals Known: *Binding I, II, III, IV, V, summoning I, III, V, warding I, III, V, banishment, counterspell, energy tap, exorcism, greater ritual preparation, invisibility shroud, invoke mastery, licence to depart, ritual preparation, scrying, spirit invasion, swift dispatch of the agent*

'Bound by my words, bound by the circle, you will serve me.'

This potent faustian is allied to House Zethu, but has the magical and political influence to deal with any of the Houses as an equal. She is also so corrupt that she is bound by numerous Covenants, limiting her options. She dwells in a black tower on the edges of the Second Circle.

Knight of the Harrowing (9th level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Saving Throws and Base Attack, Average Feats and Hit Points, Poor Skills

Hit Dice: 9d8+18 (58 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 21 (+9 purity seal, +2 shield), touch 10, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+12

Attack: Longsword +14 melee (1d8+6 plus 2d6 holy) or lance +12 melee (1d10+3)

Full Attack: Longsword +14/+9 melee (1d8+6 plus 2d6 holy) or lance +12/+7 melee (1d10+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +8

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +5, Handle Animal +2, Heal +3, Ride +8, Survival +6, Spot +6

Feats: Iliaster Font, Iron Will, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Mounted Combat, Ride-by Attack, Spirited Charge, Purity, Sense of Self

Max Iliaster/Round: 5

Corruption: 3

Challenge Rating: 9

Equipment: Purity sealed armour, heavy shield, Lance, soulbound longsword (+2 hit, +3 damage, holy)

'Fiend! Though you hide in the deepest vale of the black Pit, be sure your sins will find you out!'

A proud knight-errant of the Harrowers, this mortal warrior is untouched by the corrupting influence of the Pit thanks to his purity sealed armour and his Purity feat. He carries a longsword containing the soul of his friend and comrade-in-arms who died in the cause of the Harrowing, and rides upon a fine mortal steed dressed in chain barding.

Newcomer Marine (4th level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Feats and Base Attack, Average Saving Throws and Hit Points, Poor Skills

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 18 (+3 Dex, +4 bulletproof vest, +1 helmet), touch 13, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5

Attack: Chainsaw +5 melee (3d8+1) or shotgun +7 ranged (2d8)

Full Attack: Chainsaw +5 melee (3d8+1) or shotgun +7 ranged (2d8)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10

Skills: Intimidate +7, Spot +6, Survival +6

Feats: Dodge, Exotic Weapons Proficiency (chainsaw), Improved Initiative, Martial Weapons Proficiency, Point-Blank Shot, Simple Weapons Proficiency

Corruption: 3

Challenge Rating: 4

Equipment: Bulletproof vest, helmet, shotgun, chainsaw, chewing gum

'They think this is hell? I'll give them hell! BLAM KA-CHINK BLAM'

Hellgouts have a strange tendency to drag military bases or mercenary encampments down into the underworld. This hard-as-nails marine may be trapped in the Pit for the rest of his life, but he's not going down without a fight.

Newcomer Survivor

(1st level Mortal)

Medium Mortal

Progressions: Good Saving Throws and Skills, Average Feats and Hit Points, Poor Base Attack

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +1

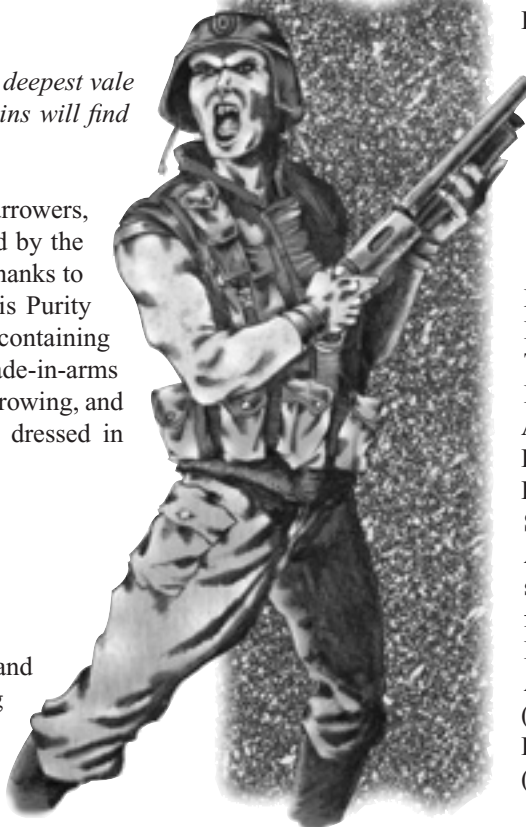
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 scavenged armour), touch 11, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-1

Attack: Dagger -1 melee (1d4-1)

Full Attack: Dagger -1 melee (1d4-1)



Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 13

Skills: Bluff +4, Escape Artist +4, Heal +5, Hide +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +4, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Survival +5, Spot +4, Tumble +4.

Feats: Purity, Simple Weapons Proficiency

Corruption: 0

Challenge Rating: 1

Equipment: Scavenged armour, flick-knife

'G... Get away from me!'

A life of petty crime on the streets of some mortal city has not prepared this poor child for Hell. She has recently been drawn through a portal into the Pit and her chances of survival are small unless she is rescued by an Early tribe or renounces her purity and becomes some demon's tool.

Plants

While the terrain of Hell is mostly barren and blasted, flora can thrive in some places in the Pit. Even the lushest forests of Hell are not the verdant green of Earth; the dominant colour is a rotten black.

Most plants are harmless – possibly poisonous, certainly unpleasant, but unlikely to threaten a character in combat. A few plants, however, are as dangerous as any demon, and these are described below.

Plant Base State

- ⊗ 8-sided Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ total Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Good Fortitude saves.
- ⊗ Skill points equal to (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die, if the plant creature has an Intelligence score. However, some plant creatures are mindless and gain no skill points or feats.

Traits: A plant creature possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry):

- ⊗ Darkvision.
- ⊗ Immunity to all mind-affecting effects
- ⊗ Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis and stunning.
- ⊗ Not subject to critical hits.
- ⊗ Proficient with its natural weapons only.
- ⊗ Proficient with no armour.
- ⊗ Plants breathe and eat, but do not sleep.

Night-Oak

Huge Plant

Hit Dice: 10d8+50 (95 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 17 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+29

Attack: Branch +16 melee (1d8+10)

Full Attack: 4 branches +16 melee (1d8+10)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, lightning blast, constrict 1d8+10

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., fire healing, DR 10/piercing, resistance to cold 10, rooted, immunity to disease, electricity and poison

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str 30, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 18

Skills: Intimidate +15, Listen +13, Spot +13

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Grapple, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (branch)

Challenge Rating: 10

Night-oaks resemble leafless black trees, with skeletal branches and thick trunks. Two gnarled boles in the centre of the night-oak function as eyes. Night-oaks preside over the forests of Hell, hunting down damned souls who try to use the forests as a haven or an escape route. They often grow on the edges of precipices or on high promontories, as they have an especial fondness for seizing fugitive souls and hurling them back down to damnation.

Constrict: A night-oak inflicts 1d8+15 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab: To use this ability, a night-oak must hit a Large or smaller opponent with a branch attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict, lightning-blast or hurl the opponent, so long as the opponent is of the requisite size and weight. Night-oaks have a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks, which is already included in the statistics block.

Lightning Blast: Night-oaks can call down bolts of lightning to smite opponents that are ensnared in their branches. To do this, it must succeed in a grapple check against the opponent. The lightning blast strikes down from the sky overhead; if the night-oak is indoors for whatever reason, or the sky is not filled with clouds, the night-oak cannot use this ability. The blast of lightning inflicts 6d8 electrical damage, with

a Reflex saving throw (DC 16) is allowed for half damage. Once the night-oak has used its lightning blast ability, it cannot use it again for 1d4 rounds. A night-oak cannot constrict an opponent and lightning blast him in the same round, nor may it call down lightning against any opponent other than one that it has grappled. Note that lightning called down from the skies of Hell by a night-oak counts as evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. A night-oak must be rooted in the soil of the Infernum to use this ability.

Fire Healing: Unlike most plants, night-oaks love fire, relishing the occasional ember showers that fall from the Infernal skies. Ordinary fire does not harm the creature at all. Hellfire damage nourishes and fortifies the night-oak. Every two points of hellfire damage dealt to the creature causes one point of healing.

Rooted (Su): Night-oaks spend their days with their roots driven deep into the scarlet soil of Hell, drawing up unholy nourishment from that accursed earth. While a night-oak is rooted, it cannot move at all, though it can still defend itself. A rooted night-oak benefits from fast healing of 10 points per round and can use its lightning blast ability against grappled opponents, for which see above.

A rooted night-oak can uproot itself if it needs to move, such as to relocate itself, pursue foes or make a tactical retreat. The night-oak must take a move action to pull its roots up. It may re-root itself if it chooses to do so but must take a full-round action to achieve this. A night-oak may not root itself on rock, hellglass or on any other surface that cannot be penetrated by roots.

Suicide Willow

Huge Plant

Hit Dice: 10d8+50 (95 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 17 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+25

Attack: Tentacle +16 melee (1d8+10)

Full Attack: 8 tentacles +16 melee (1d8+10)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, constrict 1d8+10

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/slashing, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, immunity to disease and poison

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +4

Abilities: Str 30, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 18

Skills: Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +15

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Challenge Rating: 10

Suicide willows are drab, grey, animate trees with roughly humanoid trunks that look oddly like old women or hags, their bodies contorted and bent, frozen in a posture of mourning. From their outstretched branches dangle thick, ropy strands. These have loops at the end that look exactly like hangman's nooses. A successful Spot check (DC 25) from a distance of at least 30 feet is needed to notice the loops at the end of the tentacles.

Constrict: A suicide willow deals 1d8+10 points of damage with a successful grapple check against a Large or smaller creature. As the willow seizes its victim by the neck, a creature in the willow's grasp cannot speak.

Improved Grab: To use this ability, a suicide willow must hit a Large or smaller opponent with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. Suicide willows have a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks, which is already included in the statistics block.

Whispers Of Despair: Suicide willows are shrouded in an almost palpable aura of bleak misery, the collected sorrow of all those who have taken their own lives and been condemned to the Forest of Suicides. The willows draw upon this sorrow to beckon others to their deadly embrace. They may emanate a subtle whispering that has a stupefying effect on the target, drawing him helplessly to the willow's foot where it loops a vine around his neck. When the willow begins to whisper, all creatures within a 300-foot spread other than devils and plants must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become captivated. This is a sonic, mind-affecting effect. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same willow's whispers for the next 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A captivated victim walks steadily towards the suicide willow, taking the most direct route available to him. If the path leads into a dangerous area, such as over the edge of a cliff or through a region filled with obsidian spikes, then the victim is allowed a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no

actions other than to defend themselves; they cannot attack nor can they run away but they do not suffer any penalty to Armour Class or any other defensive penalty. A victim within 5 feet of the suicide willow simply stands there in abject misery and does nothing to resist the willow's attack. At this point, the willow will attempt to grab the victim with one of its looped tentacles and choke him to death. The effect lasts for as long as the willow keeps up the whispering and for one round afterwards.

Roses of Hell

Medium Plant

Hit Dice: 6d8+3 (30 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 0 ft.

Armour Class: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+9

Attack: Thorn lash +7 melee (1d4+1 plus poison)

Full Attack: Thorn lash +7 melee (1d4+1 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Blood drain, poison, stupefying scent

Special Qualities: Plant traits, darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/boosted or bonded weapon, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 14

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +7

Feats: Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Challenge Rating: 5

The roses of Hell are of the most rich, silken scarlet to be seen anywhere. Hell is not without some specimens of beauty and its roses are without doubt one such example. Beneath their luscious blooms are thorns as thick as a man's thumb, with hollow points. The roses use these to feed. They thrive on blood and do not especially care where they get it. They will attack demons as readily as they attack mortals and the damned. House Astyanath has a special love of these roses and incorporates them into its torture devices, creating living frames on which souls are hung, with the roses' briars twined in and out of their bodily openings.

Flexible: The roses' snaking, twining briars are especially suited for ensnaring foes, giving the rose bush a +4 racial bonus to grapple checks.

Blood Drain: The roses use their long, sharp, hollow thorns both to inject poison into their victims and to

suck out their lifeblood. They can drain blood with a successful grapple check. If a rose successfully pins an opponent, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round. With each successful blood drain attack, the rose bush gains 5 temporary hit points.

Stupefying Scent: The heady aroma of the roses confuses the perceptions of those who come close to them. It is so thick as to be intoxicating. A creature coming within 30 feet of a rose bush must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or be intoxicated for as long as it remains in the area and for 1d4 rounds afterwards. An intoxicated character suffers a -2 competence penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks and Armour Class. The saving throw DC is Constitution-based. This is an inhalant poison effect, so immunities and resistances apply.

Soporific Poison: The bushes have a powerful natural weapon in their venom. When they deal damage to a creature, they pump it full of toxins that remove the pain of the wound and send the creature to sleep, so that the bush can continue to feed without interruption. The saving throw DC for the poison is 15, including a +2 racial bonus. The saving throw DC is Constitution-based. A creature that fails its saving throw falls asleep for 1d6x10 minutes. Slapping or wounding a creature that is sleeping because of poison does not automatically wake them. Every such attempt allows the creature to attempt a new Fortitude saving throw (DC 25) to waken. One such attempt can be made per round.

Moliate Sentinel

Medium Plant

Hit Dice: 4d8+4 (22 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), burrow 20 ft.

Armour Class: 13 (+3 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d6+2)

Full Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d6+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Sticky, acidic touch

Special Qualities: Plant traits, moliate speech, regeneration 5

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 0, Wis 11, Cha 3

Skills: Listen +7, Hide +0*

Feats: Power Attack, Toughness

Challenge Rating: 3

Moliate sentinels are living lumps of the moliате, the creeping fungus terrain created by House Glabretch that covers their estates on the Third Circle. The sentinels look almost indistinguishable from the fungus surrounding them – the only clue is the humanoid outline of the sentinel. The creatures are created by burying a skeleton (traditionally a human, but demons can be used) in the moliате and treating the grave with various alchemical compounds.

The sentinels can communicate through the moliате through vibrations and chemical signals. Their chief purpose is not to stop invaders, but to alert Glabretch fortresses to their presence. Each fortress is surrounded by a grove of sentinels, one of whom will moan and shake when signals are received from a particular district of the moliате.

The creatures ooze a sticky, acidic compound that is their chief means of attack. The sentinels latch onto the bodies of invaders and dissolve them.

Sticky: If a sentinel hits an opponent with a melee attack, it automatically makes a grapple attempt. If it succeeds, it is not considered to be grappling the foe, but is stuck to him. The victim's movement is reduced by 10 feet and the moliате sentinel moves with the victim. The victim suffers a –1 penalty to all attack rolls and skill checks due to the sentinel sticking to him; his movement is also reduced by 5 feet. The effects of multiple stuck sentinels are cumulative.

Acidic Touch: A stuck moliате sentinel deals 1d4 points of acid damage each round to any creature it is stuck to.

Moliате Speech: A moliате sentinel can communicate with another moliате sentinel within one mile. Only simple concepts can be communicated through this link.

Regeneration: Fire and cold deal normal damage to a moliате sentinel.

*Inside the moliате, the Hide bonus rises to +10.

Spawn

The original primitive denizens of hell, spawn are a race of misshapen, agonised monsters. They are more like caricatures of life than actual living beings; ramshackle bags of organs and fluids propelled by blind muscle and jagged bone.

Spawn are found throughout Hell. They can survive anywhere, swiftly adapting to their environment.

- ⊗ d10 Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Base attack bonus equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ total Hit Dice.
- ⊗ Good Fortitude saves (some spawn have different good saves).
- ⊗ Skill points equal to (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die.

Traits: Spawn possess the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry):

- ⊗ Intelligence score of 1.
- ⊗ Darkvision.
- ⊗ Proficient with its natural weapons only.
- ⊗ Proficient with no armour unless trained for war.
- ⊗ Spawn eat, but cannot starve to death. A spawn only eats to increase its bulk. Spawn need to sleep.
- ⊗ **Spawn Reproduction:** New spawn arise from the death throes of slain spawn. 1d4 rounds after a spawn is killed, 1d3 spawn with Hit Dice equal to half those of their parent grow from the corpse. These new spawn have half hit points per Hit Dice (i.e. they begin with hit points equal to 5 + Con modifier x Hit Dice). The new spawn have no skills or tricks. Normally, a newly-created spawn flees the site of its birth, but aggressive spawn do sometimes attack immediately after forming.

Spawn reduced below 1/8 Hit Dice do not create new spawn when they die. The created spawn are included in the Challenge Rating of the original.

Gorgoth

Gargantuan Spawn

Hit Dice: 40d10+409 (629 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 26 (–4 size, +20 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 26

Base Attack/Grapple: +30/+57

Attack: Claw +41 melee (3d6+15) or bite +37 melee (3d10+7)

Full Attack: 2 claws +41 melee (3d6+15) and bite +37 melee (3d10+7)

Space/Reach: 30 ft./20 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, swallow whole, vomit acid, crush

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction, fast healing 5

Saves: Fort +32, Ref +13, Will +12

Abilities: Str 40, Dex 10, Con 30, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +9, Survival +22

Feats: Awesome Blow, Power Attack, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Armour x4, Improved Sunder, Toughness x3, Weapon Focus (bite)

Challenge Rating: 17

Gorgoths are among the largest of common spawn. They are great hulking masses of muscle and iron-hard hide that sluggishly roam across the Circles. From some perspective, the monsters resemble elephants; from others, crabs or seaspiders. The creatures are virtually invulnerable to conventional assault; an army could hack and blast away at the monsters without having much impact on the gorgoth's sheer bulk. Fortunately, the spawn are exceedingly vulnerable to psychic assault, so deceiver-handlers are used to tame the monsters.

The internal organs of the gorgoth are incredibly resilient. The creatures can heal mortal wounds exceedingly quickly, restoring themselves from the brink of death in only a few minutes. Gorgoths are only found in the open ground of the Pit, where they have the space to roam around, and cannot fit into the tunnels beyond – this is a great stroke of good fortune for the forces of the Infernum, as an abhorrei-controlled gorgoth would be a nightmarish threat.

Improved Grab: If a gorgoth hits with its bite attack, it may immediately make a grapple attempt. This does not draw an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Swallow Whole: A gorgoth can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of up to two sizes smaller by making a successful grapple check. The swallowed creature takes 4d8+10 points of bludgeoning damage and 10 points of acid damage per round from the gorgoth's gizzard. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 12). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

A Gargantuan gorgoth's gizzard can hold 4 Medium, 16 Small, 64 Tiny or 256 Diminutive or smaller opponents.

Vomit Acid: A gorgoth can vent acid from a gland in its stomach and vomit it out. This is an attack action. The gorgoth's acid is a cone-shaped attack

with a range of 30 feet. Creatures caught within the cone must make a Reflex save (DC 30) or take 10d6 acid damage. Creatures swallowed by the gorgoth automatically take this damage and cannot make a Reflex save. A gorgoth can vomit acid once every 10 rounds.

Crush: The gorgoth rears up and smashes its bulk down on the ground. This is a full-round attack – the gorgoth rears up on its action, then smashes back down as part of its next action. Characters can flee the impact zone during the intervening time, but still risk attacks of opportunity. On its action, the gorgoth can move up to 30 feet before crushing. Any creatures underneath the gorgoth's space must make Reflex saves (DC 30) to move to the edge of the crush zone. Those still within the zone take 10d6 damage and suffer another 10d6 damage each round until the gorgoth moves or until they succeed in a Strength or Escape Artist check (DC 30) to slip out from underneath the monster.

Hellhound

Medium Spawn

Hit Dice: 4d10+12 (34 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d8+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Fiery breath, trip, damned grip

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction, scent

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +4, Survival +5

Feats: Dodge, Skill Focus (Survival)

Challenge Rating: 2

Hellhounds resemble dogs, if dogs were skinned and held together with barbed wire and slime. The ugly beasts lope across all the Circles of Hell. It is said that the breed of stalkers were created from these spawn, and certainly the two do have an eerie bond.

The hounds of Hell can smell a damned soul over miles of blood-stained ground. They stalk the dead, corralling souls and dragging them back to the House kennels. Hellhounds are trained to secure souls for their masters and to prevent damned from escaping

the torture palaces and slave pits. Of all the spawn commonly encountered in hell, the hounds are perhaps the most feared and hated, if not the most dangerous.

Fiery Breath: A hellhound can spit a jet of fire from its jaws. This flame jet is a cone with a range of 15 feet. Creatures caught in the cone take 2d6 points of fire damage (halved on a successful Reflex save (DC 14)). Breathing in this fashion is an attack action that can be used once every three rounds.

Trip: A hellhound that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+1 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the hound.

Damned Grip: Hellhounds have a great affinity for capturing the damned. The hound gets a +4 racial bonus to all grapple checks, trip attempts, bite attacks or opposed Strength checks when fighting a damned soul.

Hellworm

Huge Spawn

Hit Dice: 20d10+100 (210 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 30 ft.

Armour Class: 25 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +16 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24

Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+34

Attack: Bite +25 melee (4d8+18)

Full Attack: Bite +25 melee (4d8+18)

Space/Reach: 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Erupt, improved grab, swallow whole

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction, melt rock, tremorsense

Saves: Fort +17, Ref +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 32, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +10, Spot +10, Survival +3

Feats: Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Specialisation (bite)

Challenge Rating: 14

Hellworms are the primordial form of spawn according to some sages, who say that all the tunnels of hell were carved out by these titanic monsters biting through the rock. Certainly, the lands beyond the Pit itself are riddled with hellworms. Like all spawn, the creatures are incapable of starving to death and are indeed able to live on a diet of burning rock alone.

Hellworms are difficult to train or harness; a captured hellworm can easily bore through the floor or walls of its cell and escape that way. Indeed, they are seen as a form of highly dangerous vermin that must be driven out and destroyed. Different Houses use different techniques to rid themselves of the worms. House Zethu uses sorcery or steam-power spears that are driven into the earth to pierce the hellworms. House Sturrach has a team of elite tunnel-fighting demons who take the worms on in single combat, while House Riethii's worm-pipers can convince a rampaging hellworm to take its frustrations out in the estates next door instead of in the Riethii gardens.

In combat, hellworms use their tremorsense ability to track enemies, then explode out of the ground to swallow them whole.

Erupt: A hellworm can explode out of the ground beneath an enemy. This is a move action, so the hellworm can attack in the same round it explodes out. If the monster does this, all creatures within 40 feet of the hellworm must make Reflex saves (DC 21) or fall prone. The hellworm can only erupt after spending an entire turn underground, moving using its burrow movement.

Improved Grab: If a hellworm hits with its bite attack, it may immediately make a grapple attempt. This does not draw an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Swallow Whole: A hellworm can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of up to two sizes smaller by making a successful grapple check. The swallowed creature takes 3d8+5 points of bludgeoning damage and 5 points of acid damage per round from the hellworm's gizzard. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 12). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

A Huge hellworm's gizzard can hold 2 Medium, 8 Small, 32 Tiny or 128 Diminutive or smaller opponents.

Labour Spawn

Large Spawn

Hit Dice: 8d10+16 (60 hp)

Initiative: –1

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 12 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+18

Attack: Slam +13 melee (2d6+8)

Full Attack: Slam +13 melee (2d6+8)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 4

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2, Survival +1

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 3

Labour spawn have been bred to look roughly like humans and seem bipedal at first glance. In fact, they have four or even eight legs, but these are normally banded together into two fleshy pillars. A labour spawn can spread out its legs should it need more stable footing. The humanoid upper torsos of the creatures are absurdly over-muscled, with wide backs for carrying loads and strong arms for lifting. Most labour spawn have rings or hooks embedded in their flesh, where tools or burdens can be attached.

These spawn are amazingly dumb, but follow orders well. Their wit has been bred out of them to the extent that a labour spawn no longer feels hunger or thirst. A herd of labourers would stand by a lake until they collapsed from dehydration unless a demon ordered them to drink. They require constant supervision by their taskmasters, so labour spawn are only used in situations where brute force and no subtlety are required.

In combat, labour spawn lash out at everything around them in a panic. They are not trained even in the use of their own natural weapons, suffering a –5 penalty to all attack rolls (which has already been factored in to their statistics above).

Lesser Spawn

Small Spawn

Hit Dice: 2d10+5 (16 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares)

Armour Class: 13 (+1 size, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/–4

Attack: Claw +1 melee (1d6–1)

Full Attack: Claw +1 melee (1d6–1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: –

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +0, Will –1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 1

Skills: Listen +4

Feats: Toughness

Challenge Rating: ½

The least form of spawn of any consequence (smaller spawn are more like insects than animals and are treated as such, crushed underfoot by heedless demons to produce smaller and smaller generations until there is nothing left), lesser spawn are kept as herd animals by some Houses. They can be fattened up before being slaughtered to produce bigger, more useful types of spawn, or just killed for their spawn-meat. The communal feeding troughs of the cities are filled with lesser spawn-meat seasoned with plasmic iliaster to produce a nourishing slurry for the common hellkin.

Obsidian Shark

Huge Spawn

Hit Dice: 16d10+48 (136 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 10 ft. (2 squares); swim 60 ft.

Armour Class: 20 (–2 size, +2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+27

Attack: Bite +17 melee (3d8+10)

Full Attack: Bite +17 melee (3d8+10)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend and tear, frenzy

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction, scent, immunity to fire

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Jump +20, Spot +6, Survival +6, Swim +20

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack

Challenge Rating: 12

Obsidian sharks are encountered mostly in the fiery Sunless Sea, although some have swum up through the tunnels to infest other bodies of liquid in the Pit. They resemble earthly sharks, but are armoured in plates of volcanic glass and rock. The cracks between these plates glow blood red when the shark is angered or hungry. The monsters are ferocious and vicious, jumping out of the water or lava to bite people on the shore.

Like hellworms, the sharks are of little use to the hellkin, although the abhorei have a navy of abhorei warriors in flame-proof caskets welded to obsidian sharks. Although the spawn are just as mindless as the rest of their kind, obsidian sharks do have slightly more cunning and tenacity. They understand pack tactics and ambushes as well as trained hellhounds do.

Rend and Tear: The taste of blood from a successful Bite attack drives an obsidian shark wild. If a shark makes a successful bite attack, it may immediately make another bite attack on the same target with a -10 penalty. If this second attack hits, it may make another bite attack and so on, with a cumulative -10 penalty to each attack. Once the obsidian shark misses a bite attack, the cycle of attacks stops. The shark cannot combine this ability with a use of its Spring Attack feat; it must choose whether to move on after attacking or to keep biting.

Frenzy: An obsidian shark in combat gains a +4 morale bonus to all Will saves.



Skills: An obsidian shark has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Riding Spawn

Large Spawn

Hit Dice: 4d10+4 (26 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+9

Attack: Kick +4 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: 2 kicks +4 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 3

Skills: Jump +13, Listen +2, Spot +2

Feats: Run

Challenge Rating: 1

Riding spawn resemble greyhounds the size of horses, crossed with some bizarre relative of a spider. Their legs are long, spindly things with entirely too many joints. The spawn run extremely quickly and sure-footedly, making them excellent if unpleasant-looking mounts. They can be saddled, although most demons prefer to just carve a seat out of the flesh and bone of their steed's back.

Certain Houses, notably Oblurott and Sturrach, breed considerably larger and stronger riding steeds; the Sturrach use them for war, but the Oblurots just need them to support the bulk of their gluttonous Lords. Riding spawn are trained for war and can be made to lash out with their spindly forelegs; the beasts have terrible tempers and often smash grooms and stable-slaves in fits of anger.

Tentacled Horror

Large Spawn

Hit Dice: 6d10+12 (45 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 20 ft.

Armour Class: 20 (–1 size, +5 Dex, +6 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+14

Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d6+2) or by weapon

Full Attack: 6 slams +8 melee (1d6+2) or by weapons

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Tentacle burst, weapons, constrict 2d6+3.

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 3

Skills: Jump +3, Listen +2, Spot +3

Feats: Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse

Challenge Rating: 5

A tentacled horror is a knot of ropy, slimy grey limbs. The creatures move like great snakes or worms by wrapping themselves up into a roughly cylindrical mass of tentacles and slithering along the ground. Somewhere hidden within the mass of limbs is a mouth, through which the spawn feeds on creatures that it has pulped with its crushing tentacles.

The horrors are found mostly in Upper Hell. They are of little use to the Infernum, save as a source of raw materials. Young demons are sent out to hunt the horrors, which are then killed, dried and stretched into rope and belt material.

Tentacle Burst: A tentacled horror can lash out with its tentacles in every direction, flicking enemies away. This is a full-attack action. The horror attacks all creatures within reach and makes a touch attack on each. If the attack hits, then the creature struck must make an opposed Strength or Balance check against the horror's Strength. If the horror wins the opposed check, the creature is knocked 10 feet back and falls prone. A creature who cannot be pushed back due to an obstacle like a wall takes 1d6 damage instead.

Weapons: Tentacled horrors are automatically proficient in all simple melee weapons. They often use swords and spears they have salvaged from the battlefield.

Constrict: If a tentacled horror grapples a foe, it automatically inflicts 2d6+3 points of crushing damage each round. This is a swift action for the spawn.

War-Spawn

Large Spawn

Hit Dice: 6d10+18 (51 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (–1 size, +5 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+14

Attack: Bite +9 melee (2d6+9)

Full Attack: Bite +9 melee (2d6+9)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Roar, heedless warbeast

Special Qualities: Darkvision, spawn reproduction

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +3

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 5

Skills: Jump +16, Listen +3, Spot +3, Survival +4

Feats: Ability Focus (Roar), Endurance, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 4

War-spawn look like misshapen allosaurs, with oversized jaws and a barrel-shaped chest. Their weak forearms are surgically replaced with rings to which straps and saddles are attached. The spawn are bred for combat; their only discernible emotion is bloodlust and they are unaffected by the loss of limbs. A war-spawn will keep fighting without heed to its own injuries until it keels over unconscious.

The roar of the war-spawn is a familiar sound on the battlefields of the Fifth. The creatures have a deep-throated, brassy call that incorporates damaging subsonic resonance. The roar of a war-spawn can reduce a foe's internal organs to a red jelly in a matter of seconds.

The best war-spawn belong to House Sturrach, who can breed them big enough to carry third-stage Hulks. The mercenary band Beror's Cavalry also have fine steeds and trade them in the mercenary city of Golgotha.

Roar: A war-spawn can roar a number of times per day equal to its Constitution modifier (normally three). Each roar is a sonic attack that affects a cone fifteen feet in length in front of the spawn. Roaring is a full-attack action. Any creature caught in the roar must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or take 2d6 points of sonic damage and be stunned for one round.

Heedless Warbeast: A war-spawn is unaffected by effects that create fear or pain.

CAMPAIGNING

Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste...

This chapter covers running *Infernum* games for the Games Master. The *Infernum* setting and rules are specially designed to support some styles of play and are not very suited to other forms, so this chapter will also cover fine-tuning the game to suit you and your Players.

Infernum Basics

The basic concepts of the *Infernum* setting and their impact on campaigns are:

The characters are in Hell...

All around them are demons, and lakes of burning sulphur. Condemned souls are thrown into the Pit, to be savaged and tortured by demons. Evil forces plot the downfall of all that is good and hopeful. This is the fiery underworld, where the dark Lords dwell.

Fundamentally, Hell is cool. It has become the shorthand in gaming for 'the ultimate challenge' – the paladin in Hell is a classic image of the lone warrior facing overwhelming odds. Demons and other infernal emanations are flexible, intelligent villains in all sorts of campaigns. Hell crosses time and genre – demons fighting with claw and fiery breath have been thrown against sword-wielding barbarians, meek university professors delving into arcane lore, or grizzled marines from Martian research bases. By setting a game in Hell, you instantly catch the Players' imaginations and give them a handle on the setting. There is a wealth of existing imagery and mythology dealing with Hell to use to support your game.

...but it is not quite the Hell of mythology

The Hell of *Infernum* deliberately discards some elements of Hell and twists others. There is no Lucifer in Hell to provide an empty throne to fight over. Demons are not wholly and utterly evil, to make them more viable as characters. The timeline of Hell is compressed into a few centuries to make it more manageable and to show Players that they can effect change in Hell, that things will not continue eternally for the next million years as they have for

the last million. Parts of *Infernum* draw much more from science-fiction than fantasy or mythology; the aim is to put new spins on classic themes and make them more suitable for roleplaying.

Heaven and the Mortal World are both partially occluded

This is a game about Hell, so the focus of the game is on infernal affairs. Characters arrive in Hell with enough memory of the mortal world to give them a personality and background, but with enough erased to ensure that the priority of every newcomer mortal is not 'get back to Earth'. Hiding the mortal world from most campaigns makes Hell the centre of the game, while still letting the Games Master drop in whatever historical elements or characters he wants.

Hiding Heaven has another, more subtle but also more important effect. *Infernum* is derived primarily from Judeo-Christian sources, which means that the setting implies the God of Abraham/the Father of Jesus is sitting up there in Heaven attended by His loyal angels. To deepen the despair in *Infernum* and to raise the question that the demons can win their war, the nature and presence of God is hidden by the Lethe Clouds. Characters in Hell are cut off from any divine support; they are on their own regardless of faith.

Hell is Factionalised



mortal tribes etc – are a great tool for the Games Master. A faction provides a way to get a group of characters together and an excuse to give them plots and problems to sort out, and to give them support when they need it. As antagonists, the factions work like immortal Non-Player Characters – you can kill a demon, but probably not an entire Great House. Earn the enmity of the Glabretchi and you will have assassins and plague bearers hunting you until the end of your days.

Factions give rise to intrigue, war, power plays and a sort of organised chaos. Roleplaying settings need a certain amount of structure so the Players can make plans and alliances with established groups. Factions can be part of a character's background and the overall structure of a campaign. However, roleplaying settings also need a great deal of chaos, of entropy; things need to be loose and chaotic to give the characters a chance to make real changes. If the established groups and authorities control everything and there is no change or danger, the characters have nothing to do. Having multiple warring factions gives the Games Master the best of both worlds; there are established groups to relate to, but they rise and fall relative to each other, creating chaos and opportunity in their wake.

Demons consume Iliaster

Demons need iliaster to live and need yet more to fuel their powers. There is not enough iliaster in the Infernum for all the demons (especially when the elder demons consume far more than their share), so the demons must fight for it. On the level of individual characters, their need for iliaster forces them to get out and go on adventures/come up with schemes/serve their masters – however they get their iliaster, they must get it somehow.

Iliaster is a universally coveted resource in the Pit; everyone is after it, so anything involving a large amount of iliaster will draw plenty of attention.

Damned Souls produce Iliaster...

...which explains why demons collect souls and torture them. The exploitation of souls is a big part of the horror of the setting. Many roleplaying games involve control of some sort of resource; in hell, it is people.

Humans become Damned Souls, but have advantages while alive

The abilities of uncorrupted humans to manipulate

fate, avoid sorcerous wards, evade Covenants and so on are very useful to demons and give demons a reason to keep humans alive. If mortals lacked these abilities, then they would be killed on sight to turn them into more useful damned. Giving different members in a group different but complementary abilities as a reason to keep each other alive is key in a setting as violent and paranoid as the Infernum.

However, just because a mortal is killed is no reason to retire the character – mortals can continue as damned souls if the Player wishes.

Angels are composed of Iliaster

The third character type, fallen angels, are made of the thing that the rest of the Infernum seeks, so they will lead precarious and rather brief lives unless very cunning. Angels play quite differently to demons and mortals; while the other two slowly but steadily rise in power, angels start off powerful and have to take steps to retain and rebuild this power as it diminishes.

There is wonder, mystery, terror and horror

The Infernum is not completely ghastly. The atmosphere of oppression and evil should be almost – but not quite – unbearably confining and nasty. If playing in Hell were as horrible as actually being there, there would be no point to the game. *Infernum* is designed to mix genres and styles of play within its overarching mood of horrific dark fantasy. You can have low humour in petty demon politics and backstabbing, heroic combat against the odds, investigation into ancient mysteries about the First Fallen and the House founders, triumph and accomplishment when the characters defeat their foes or make Hell better (or worse, depending on their goals). While there is an infinity of pain, torment and horror in Hell, there is room for more besides.

Survival and Conquest are both difficult, but possible

This last element gives hope to the characters. It is possible to 'win' in *Infernum* – the forces of darkness are not so mighty that they cannot be toppled or replaced by the characters. The initial stages of an *Infernum* campaign should be bitter fights for survival, but the latter stages should be epic conquests of the Pit. Obviously, this is a generalisation – a game entirely set in Dis, for example, will be very different to a military campaign in the Upper Circles – but it is always true that it is possible, with courage and luck, to come to rule in Hell.

Campaign Design

As *Infernum* characters can go up to 30th level, campaigns can last a long time. Designing a single plot arc to last that long is tricky, so it is best to design the campaign in stages of, say, five levels at a time. Have the first few adventures be about the characters' low-level exploits as ignoble demon peons. The next five levels might see the characters becoming trusted agents of a demon Lord. Levels 11-15 have the characters betrayed by another servant and forced to go on the run. From 16-20 they are fighting to overthrow their former master and betrayer and take the domain from them and so on. At any stage, the Games Master can alter future material to take Player actions into account – if the characters betray the rival agent first, then the Games Master could swap around material he had planned for the third stage and have the characters be fighting against a Free City heresy, aided by their former rival.

The stages do not need to be planned in detail, or even planned at all. There is enough to do in the Pit that the Games Master can just let the characters wander or run freely without having to feed them plot hooks all the time.

Getting Started

The first decision that must be made is what sort of characters will be used in the campaign. A game involving only mortals has a completely different set of options to a game involving only demons or a mix of characters. Talk to the Players and find out what they want to play.

In general, the more demons in the party, the nastier and more evil the group will be as a whole. This is not a strict rule; while demons are naturally more savage and ruled by their passions, and their upbringing and society is an evil one, they are not irredeemably evil by nature. Like mortals, demons can conceivably choose their own moral path, although no demon has ever chosen to turn away from the darkness.

Find out what sort of game the players want to play. *Infernum* can cover everything from heroic defiance to wallowing in the depths of evil. Taken as a whole, the characters could be:

⊗ **Good:** The characters are pure and perhaps even holy. They are moral exemplars, paladins in Hell and champions of what is right. Such characters face terrible dangers in the *Infernum* as they are

directly opposed to everything it stands for. They cannot tolerate any of it; the characters will not rest until they are dead or the whole *Infernum* is washed away. Common character types are angels, some Knights of the Harrowing, especially pious and morally upright newcomers.

⊗ **Heroic:** While the characters try to do the right thing, survival and the preservation of good is their main goal. A Good character wants to destroy the whole *Infernum*, but a Heroic character is content to drive it back and create an enclave of hope and light amid the darkness. Common character types include most latter-day Knights of the Harrowing, the Broken Chain and Tribe of Emnas, some angels and newcomers.

⊗ **Desperate:** The character just wants to survive, but has limits on what he will do to survive. He knows how desperate and dire his situation is, but is unwilling to debase himself just to survive. An escaped slave unwilling to sacrifice others to cover his tracks, or a newcomer who fights against Corruption even when it would bring them greater power are examples of Desperate characters. Some idealistic Free City demons can even be Desperate in certain lights.

⊗ **Better than the Rest:** The character is evil, but he is less evil than others. A mercenary who still fights for the highest bidder, but obeys the rules of chivalric warfare, or a demon Lord who does not oppress his damned quite as much as he could are both evil but they are much better than others of their kind. They are anti-heroes of a sort, especially if they use their evil resources to do good overall. The campaign will include the characters doing evil acts, but these will be few and far between and the game will not dwell on them. Some few demons, faustians and corrupt mortals are Better than the Rest.

⊗ **Evil:** The character is as corrupt and venal as any demon of the Pit. The game will include the full horror of the *Infernum*; the characters will kill and betray each other if it suits their purposes, torture and sin are common and so on. Most demons and faustians are purely Evil.

⊗ **Utterly Evil:** The Players have free reign to be as nasty as their black little hearts can conceive. Creative tortures and diabolical plots are positively encouraged. Being as evil as possible is the name of the game. The worst demons are Utterly Evil.

⊗ **Amoral:** The character's moral code is not yet determined. As the game progresses, characters will find themselves choosing sides, rising and falling depend on what happens to them and how they react. Many newcomers start out Amoral.

It should be noted that these options are not strict

rules, nor are they 'alignments' or beliefs per se. They are a measure of how a Player wants to play the game. The Games Master should listen to what the Players want to play. Try to avoid too great a spread of moral standings; a good angel trying to redeem itself will not tolerate the company of demons for long. Gaps of more than two or three moral categories should be avoided.

Group Types

Once the Players have vaguely agreed on what sort of characters they will play (or the Games Master has decided what the campaign will focus on – campaign design can begin at any point, really), the next key question is what brings and keeps the characters together. Having a good group structure is vital for campaign longevity in such a chaotic setting. The group normally depends on what sort of characters are involved:

- ⊗ **All Humans:** All-human games are easy to run; the Harrowers or any of the mortal tribes are obvious choices. The characters could also be slaves and the campaign could start with their escape. Alternatively, the characters could all be newcomers brought in through the same Hellgout and arriving in Hell at the same time. Especially evil Games Masters could even start the game off as another roleplaying game and then bring the characters into Hell after a few sessions.
- ⊗ **All Angels:** Again, the best option is to have all the characters Fall at the same time – there are so few angels in Hell that the chance of them meeting up by accident is incredibly remote. The characters would have to work together to survive, as they will be attacked by every demon in Hell at first. An interesting option might be to have the characters summoned into Hell by a powerful sorcerer using

summoning V – the angels not so much Fallen as Torn Down.

- ⊗ **All Demons:** This is pretty much the default *Infernum* campaign. The big questions are – are all the characters part of the same faction or are they a mixed group. If so, why are they together? The characters could all be assigned to fortresses in the same section of Hell, they could be from allied Houses, or be outside the House structure entirely as mercenaries, renegades, Free City demons and so on.
- ⊗ **Mixed Demons and Humans:** A game with more demons than humans works just like a demon-centric game. Mortal servants or faustians work perfectly well with a group of demons. The mortal might be technically lower class than the demons, but the disparity is not so big as to cause too much disruption in the group.
- ⊗ **Mixed Humans and Demons:** When mortals outnumber demons, the likelihood is that the characters are renegades trying to survive in the Pit. They could be brigands working the roads of Upper Hell or spies amid the lower classes in the lower Hells. The demon acts as their public face while the mortals use their talents to survive.
- ⊗ **Mixed Humans and Angels:** Angels often take refuge among mortal tribes, especially those on the Path of the Mortal. The humans can support the angel as it hides from demons, while the angel is a powerful protector of the mortals.
- ⊗ **All Mixed:** A mixed group of characters including both demons and angels is rare. It works perfectly well in higher-level games, when the angel has survived, become corrupted and is more valuable as a warrior of a demon House instead of as meat for the rendering pot. Having all the characters be part of a single faction is the normal approach here.

Group Ideas – Moral Conflicts

One Good, One Desperate, Three Heroic: The Good character is a newcomer determined to defeat the demon empire. The Desperate character is an experienced warrior of the Bori, who has survived all her life through skill and cunning. The three Heroic characters are other mortals or angels who are friends and companions of the first two. The Good character will try to push the group into more and more effective and dangerous attacks against the Infernum, while the Desperate character will counsel caution and secrecy instead.

Better Than The Rest and Evil: This is a perfect set-up for a group of demons. They are all trying to climb the ladder of promotion and nobility, but for different reasons. The conflict will arise when they have gained enough power to make betrayal worthwhile – will the more selfish characters turn on their erstwhile friends, or is their self-interest enough to hold the group together?



Campaign Types

What are the characters there to do? What is the overarching structure of the campaign – or the current stage of it anyway? Are the characters mercenary demons looking for a well-paid fight or are they settlers trying to drive wild spawn and renegades out of a previously unconquered section of a Circle? Is their mission to clear a section of the Inferno Line or to assassinate sorcerers who have irritated one House or another?

Not every adventure should be directly related to the current campaign type; you can have subplots that focus on one particular character or change-of-pace games where the characters get to do something quite different. For example, in a game where the characters are bodyguards and agents of a demon Lord, having a game where they are *summoned* away and have to travel home as fast as possible would be a refreshing break from the normal round of missions.

Campaign Types include:

- ⊗ **Survival:** The characters are just trying to survive. Their problems may simply be getting enough food or iliaster, or they could be fleeing pursuers. Escaped slaves or newcomers are chased by stalkers and slavers; angels are pursued by House military forces. Demons can be hunted too – a demon

accused of treachery or a member of a defeated and destroyed Lesser House might have to flee to avoid being thrown into the spawning pits. In a game of survival, victory is just winning another day of life. The characters search for resources and a refuge to call home. Try having one main pursuer as a continuing adversary, one who is considerably more powerful than the characters. The characters have to build their strength by fighting lesser hunters until they are experienced enough to turn the tables on the continuing adversary.

- ⊗ **Servants of a Faction:** The characters are all part of the same group. They do missions to benefit that faction while they work off their beginning Covenants and rise in rank. The trick here is to have a mix of missions; not every House Oblurott assignment should revolve around food, for example. The sort of missions will depend on the characters' faction and location, and may take them all over the Pit and incorporate ideas from any of the other campaign structures listed here.

- ⊗ **Servants of a Patron:** Similarly to the above, the characters all serve the same Lord. The chief difference between this structure and 'Servants of a Faction' is that a Lord is a much more limited force than a faction. He could be overthrown or the characters could leave his service. Furthermore, different character types like demons from different Houses could all be united under a single master. Sample masters include demon nobles, powerful

sorcerers with binding spells or mysterious shadowy patrons who pay the characters.

⊗ **Agents for Hire:** The characters are skilled in some specialist field and accept commissions from whoever can pay their fee. Mercenaries or assassins are common choices here, but how about demonic detectives working in a city? Or fortress designers? Freelance sorcerers and their demon guards? Demonic party organisers? A troupe of entertainers who mix a little spying in? Expert hunters? Adventures centre on the characters getting a new job and completing it, despite whatever complications and dangers it involves.

⊗ **Renegades:** The characters are not hunted, but have no specific means of support. They can turn their hands to anything as they wander through Hell. They might be thieves one day and mercenaries the next. They are beholden to no demon Lord, but have nothing except what they carry to call their own. This is a variation on the survival campaign, only not quite as desperate. Each day brings a different mission; the Games Master should keep the characters on the edge of penury and starvation to keep them hungry for new tasks.

⊗ **Explorers:** The characters are delving into the unknown and the mysterious. This can be exploring previously unmapped sections of Hell, like the far shore of the Sea of Lament or the deep tunnels, but it also covers characters who are delving into the mysteries of the history of the Infernum, trying to discover what happened to Lucifer or the origins of House Lictat. Each adventure has the characters pushing deeper into the unknown or discovering some new clue to help them progress.

⊗ **Traders:** The characters are engaged in some sort of commercial trade. For example, they could gather souls from unconquered soul fields and carry them to Minos for trading. They could run a boat through the canals of the Third and the seas of Outer Hell. Missions include gathering resources, transporting it and dealing with buyers. At each stage, the characters face dangers – Early tribesmen, brigands and deceitful demons in the case of soul traders working out of Minos.

⊗ **Thieves:** The characters survive by stealing and raiding. This campaign structure also covers Broken Chain raiders trying to free damned and mortal slaves. Each adventure is a new heist to be planned and executed. Demon pirates on the Sunless Sea are a fun variation on this.

⊗ **Soldiers:** The characters are all part of some military group. Unlike mercenaries, they have constant employment. Missions are just that, tasks to be done or battles to be fought. In normal settings, the chain of command is a problem in military games, but *Infernum* is built around

unequal power relationships.

⊗ **Spies:** The characters gather intelligence for some master or other purpose. Missions are new targets to be infiltrated or hidden lore to be uncovered. Paranoia and betrayal go hand in hand with this sort of game.

⊗ **Masters:** The characters are in charge of something that they have to tend and protect. They might be garrison troops in a fortress or other facility. They could be torturers in a torture palace or viceroys of an isolated town. Missions centre on threats to whatever the characters are masters of and the day-to-day challenges of running it. For example, the characters could be master-sorcerers in a school where they train apprentices. Adventures could include apprentices summoning demons too powerful for them to control, House interference in the school, looking for stolen spellbooks and so on.

⊗ **Conquerors:** The characters are engaged in military conquest of a region, by fair means or foul. See *Book of the Conqueror* for support for this key style of play.

⊗ **Rulers:** As Masters, above, but the characters are the owners of the domain and do not report to anyone except their feudal masters, if any. Variations of this game include demon nobles and their chief aides, the city council of a Free City, chieftains of an Early tribe and so on.

⊗ **Local Events:** The characters all dwell in the same geographical area and so are all affected by the same local events. The characters presumably have their own purposes for being there, but these are sub-plots compared to the events they must deal with as a group. For example, one character could be a spy for a rival House, another the local ruler, a third a sorcerer who makes her home in the region – but they all work together when abhorei raiders invade.

⊗ **Investigators:** The characters are involved in solving mysteries. City watch, Pandemonium Guard, House agents, Harrowing inquisitors – each mission is a new puzzle to be unravelled.

⊗ **On a Quest:** The characters have banded together to accomplish some great deed, like slaying a demon Lord. Each adventure brings them one step closer towards their ultimate goal.

Campaign Evolution

Campaigns should be designed to move from one stage to another. *Infernum* assumes that demon characters will at least attempt to become Lords of a domain, which moves the game towards politics, mass combat and conquest.

Combining Campaign Structures

Combining two or more of the set-ups described above can lead to a memorable campaign. Rulers + local events are an excellent combination, for example. The characters are nobles whose domains all border on each other and on a neutral city. Events in the city affect all of their domains and the neutral ground allows them all to meet with relative security. The running of a domain gives each character something to do when not jockeying for position with the others.

Quest & Survival is another option; the characters have to find something – or have something and need to find out how to use it – before their pursuers destroy them. One problem with Survival games is that the Players are basically challenged to end the campaign by escaping; adding a Quest element gives them a goal to strive towards beyond ‘not dying today.’

The Infernum is basically a big sandbox for the Players. While there are plots and overarching stories running through the setting, there is also a great deal of freedom for the characters to move around within this bizarre environment. Ideally, the game will end up with the Players driving the campaign and the Games Master having his Non-Player Characters reach and counter, instead of the other way around.

As described earlier, a campaign can be divided into stages – mini-campaigns – of a half-dozen or so levels. Major villains can extend over two or more stages, but each stage should have its own adversaries to be conquered by the characters. The start or end of a stage is also a good time to swap characters in or out.

Campaign Seeds

While a campaign should be tailored to the characters and the style of the Games Master, here are a few sample seeds:

Demons

The Dreaming Dead: The characters are all spawned from the same pit. Normally, the personality and spirit of the demon who is thrown into the pit is annihilated completely by the acids, but something strange happened when the characters were spawned. Something of their progenitor survived in the form of fragmentary memories and desires. That demon’s former allies and peers are now mighty Lords and influential courtiers among the Houses. The characters are just low-ranking demons, but they remember a few secrets that their masters would prefer to keep hidden...

Hunters of the Seventh Circle: The characters are

a band of demons who are kept outside the control of the Houses. As the Garden of Unholy Delights is crowded with estates owned by thousands of different Lords and factions, it is almost impossible to do anything there without treading on some demon Lord’s claws. The characters however, have a special status; they are bounty hunters, who are allowed to enter any estate in pursuit of their quarry. They are employed by the Houses to hunt down Free City terrorists, renegade sorcerers and so on – enemies that must be destroyed immediately, instead of waiting for permission to be granted from the dozen Lords whose lands lie between hunter and prey. Of course, having this right means the characters would be useful pawns for some demon.

The Abhorei War: The Houses tire of having the Kingdom of Abhor as an enemy and decide to eliminate it. It is announced that an armada made up of ships from a coalition of Houses will strike out across the Sunless Sea and erase the abhorei from existence. A small scout force is sent out first, which includes the characters. However, inter-House warfare delays the armada before it invades, leaving the characters trapped for months on the abhorei side of the sea. How do they survive? Do they try to steal a ship and make it home, find the old Glabretchi tunnels or ally with their bizarre neighbours?

In the Shadow of Zeberrok: Great Mount Zeberrok dominates the jagged skyline of the Second Circle. The characters’ master decides to add the valley beneath Zeberrok to its domain, so the characters are sent out to conquer the valley. There are independent demons, wild spawn, ancient ruins and mortal barbarians dwelling in the valley and the characters have to clear them all out. They have a handful of troops and scant resources; can they trick the various groups in the valley into eliminating each other?

Angels

The New Gods: The characters are new-fallen angels, fleeing from demon hunters. They stumble across a tribe of mortals, who take them in and worship them. The characters discover that another fallen angel gathered these mortals and acted as their deity, protecting and guiding them in exchange for their service and worship. Do the characters continue this deception and gain a band of established and skilled followers?

The Radiant Heavenly City: More than the characters fell from Heaven – a whole section of the divine realm fell with them. The characters find themselves in a broken but still shining silver city that has crash-landed somewhere in Hell. The city will soon be besieged by hosts of demons; do they try to defend it, make deals, sell off the wealth of Heaven to the highest bidder or make their stand amid the shards of their home?

The Shadow of the First Fallen: The characters find signs that the angelic First Fallen – Lucifer and his cohorts – left clues behind them when they fled Hell. The characters seem to be on a path that will end with them reclaiming Lucifer's throne. Were the characters lured out of Heaven and is this path a cunning trap? Who is pulling their strings?

Mortals

The Trapped Hellgout: The characters' home town is caught in a hellgout and brought to Hell. However, this is not a normal gout; the town keeps slipping back into the limbo region between realms. The characters therefore have a period of a few days when their town is lost between the mortal world and Hell, during which time they can heal and prepare for their next intersection with Hell. They can even sometimes make it back to the mortal world for a brief time. Is there a way to reverse the gout and return home?

The Devil You Know: After being hunted and attacked by various hellkin, the characters meet a demon Lord who seems relatively... nice. It is still a nightmare Lord of the abyss, but it offers the characters a home and a partnership. It claims to need allies it can trust, instead of slaves. Can the characters trust this demon or is it just trying to draw them into its power to seduce them?

The Walking Dead: The characters are servants of a mortal sorcerer who is also a historian. He wants to uncover all the hidden events of mortal history. To do that, he interrogates the dead. Some souls can be summoned up and questioned, but other souls are locked inside fortresses or are lost. These are the ones the characters must hunt down and retrieve for the sorcerer.

Scenario Design

Each individual episode in a campaign should also be designed carefully by the Games Master – to a degree. *Infernum* is loose enough that the Games Master can let the Players deviate from his pre-planned events without causing too much trouble. For example, the scenario revolves around the characters being hired by a demon merchant to escort its cargo to a trade city. The characters instead choose to turn on their employer, kill it and steal the cargo. In a more lawful and ordered setting, then this act would cause the characters to become pariahs or be arrested by the civil authorities. In the *Infernum*, the only people concerned will be those directly injured or discomforted by the death of the demon. Might makes right in this setting.

If the characters cause too much chaos and anger too many powerful adversaries, they will be destroyed by House troops or some other powerful group, but by and large they can do whatever they can get away with it. In



Infernum, it is alright to attack the villagers.

Still, having good solid plots is the foundation of an entertaining game.

Set-up

The basic plots of a scenario are the campaign structures outlined above on a smaller scale. If the campaign is one of survival, then an individual scenario would be about a particular obstacle or danger that the characters must pass or escape in order to keep surviving. If the campaign has the characters acting as troops for a demon Lord, then an individual scenario would be a single mission given out by their Lord.

Examples might include:

Survival:

- ⊗ There is a demon army on manoeuvres in the territory ahead of the characters. Ten thousand demons, with their train of war machines, supplies, slaves and camp followers lie between the characters and escape.
- ⊗ A mortal party's food supplies become fouled. They need to scavenge food immediately. The only source is an Oblurott concentration farm, guarded by hellhounds. How do they sneak in?
- ⊗ The characters meet a guide, who promises to lead them into a safer area. The guide however, brings its own danger with it – it is being hunted by a different group of stalkers and wants the characters to defend it when they catch up.

Tips: There are two options for survival games; you can keep track of the characters' resources like food and water, or you can just assume that they only have just enough to get by in any scenario. Taking the first option lets the Players plan ahead, but can result in the Games Master being forced by the rules to kill off the characters. The second option is a bit more arbitrary, but requires less book-keeping and planning.

Servants of a Faction:

- ⊗ The characters' superior orders them to spy on a higher-up member of the faction. A Riethii politician has them spy on a courtier who is rumoured to be carrying on an affair with a Lictat noble.
- ⊗ The characters are sent to deal with a threat to one of the faction's outlying outposts. For example, an Astyanath torture palace is endangered by Carthenay saboteurs.
- ⊗ There is an opening for promotion, but only one character can get it; what do they do to decide the

recipient?

Tips: The faction should be divided against itself, with lots of little subgroups for the Players to ally with. Try to give each character their own distinct niche; as they will be sharing House mutations or special skills, there is less room for them to distinguish themselves.

Servants of a Patron:

- ⊗ The characters' patron orders them to pretend to betray him, so they can be recruited by a rival and become spies. To prove their betrayal, the characters need to pick one of their fellows to murder.
- ⊗ The patron leaves his holdings in the hands of a seneschal or other lieutenant, who becomes the characters' superior. However, the replacement proves to be incompetent; what do the characters do?

Tips: The patron will obviously be a major character in the game, so it should be well developed as a personality. Still, the characters and not the patron are the focus of the game; use the patron to give the characters plots and advice, not as the protagonist of the campaign.

Agents for Hire:

- ⊗ A guild of assassins is hired to prevent an assassination, on the grounds that it is the most skilled at finding weaknesses in a fortress. At the same time, it is hired to assassinate its new patron.
- ⊗ A mortal tribe tries to hire a demonic mercenary band, offering them the souls of the mortal dead in exchange for protection.

Tips: Encourage the Players to invest in the campaign by building up a power base. A band of assassins could gain allies and repeating patrons, build a base or fortress and so on.

Renegades:

- ⊗ The characters come across the wreckage of a crashed dirigible, which contains important documents relating to the history of a House. It is obvious that the House will come after the lost flyer, but can the characters gather and sell the documents before House troops arrive?
- ⊗ House Lictat contacts the characters and offers them the chance to claim a barony – if they can build a fortress on the First Circle and defend the territory around it, the Lictat will legitimise the claim.

Tips: As with Survival above, you need to keep the characters penniless and hungry, so they will take whatever tasks you throw at them. In a game where the characters are travelling, the major Non-Player Characters need to be equally mobile in terms of their selves or their sphere of influence.

Explorers:

- ⊗ The characters come across a previously unrecorded tunnel entrance, filled with a new strain of hostile and hungry spawn. These spawn seem to be controlled by some mysterious intelligence.
- ⊗ While exploring, the characters are attacked by Brokenlanders. They are far from the normal targets of these extra-cosmic invaders; what are the Brokenlanders doing out here?

Tips: A campaign where the characters are mobile and constantly pushing into new territory lets the Games Master throw whatever plots he wants at the characters from week to week. A little foreshadowing goes a long way; drop hints about what the characters will encounter in the future through signs and portents in the landscape.

Traders:

- ⊗ The characters discover that a besieged Free City is in desperate need of a particular resource; say, fell oil to keep a vital industry going. If the characters can race down through the Circles, get past the siege line, sneak into the city and find a buyer without being declared heretics, House spies or just eaten alive, they can sell their cargo and make a profit.
- ⊗ A brigand captures the characters, but offers to spare their lives if they lead more caravans into his trap. The characters will have to return to civilisation and convince others to trust them.

Tips: Depending on the Games Master and players, this can be an exercise in accounting and trade, or just an excuse to move the characters around Hell getting involved in all sorts of nastiness and depravity.

Thieves:

- ⊗ A Riethii party attracts the rich and famous. If the characters could get an invitation or sneak into the estate, they could pick the pockets of the guests or even kidnap a few choice targets.
- ⊗ The characters are framed for a theft by another rogue. However, even when they are fleeing from the House guards, they are summoned away by a sorcerer. The sorcerer wants the stolen item; he does not care if they have it or not, they must get it for him or he will be... displeased.

Tips: Remember how vengeful demon nobles are; the characters will attract dozens of enemies, making it harder and harder to fence whatever they steal. They may be forced to make alliances they do not want in order to survive.

Soldiers:

- ⊗ Demon warfare is notoriously wasteful. The characters are assigned to what is obviously a suicide mission; they are to distract a rival by charging into the teeth of its defences. They are heavily Covenanted to ensure their obedience. How do they escape their fate?
- ⊗ The characters are given command of a legion of the dead. It soon becomes evident that there is a Haimon spy among their dead. How do they identify the traitor before it brings them to disaster?

Tips: Where possible, give the characters their own command so they are more than foot soldiers. Low-level characters can be assigned as scouts or special operations forces; more powerful characters can command sections or whole armies. In any case, make sure the characters have as much control over their own destinies as possible.

Spies:

- ⊗ The characters are hired to sneak into a Carthenay fortress and steal personal items to allow for future *scrying* and *swift dispatch of the agent* spells. The characters soon discover that a coup is about to overthrow the Lord of the fortress; can they use the confusion to their advantage?
- ⊗ The characters discover that the demon they have been spying up is actually an impostor; someone has shapechanged to look like their actual target and all the information they have been passing back to their masters is completely and utterly false. How do they save their own hides from the spawning pits?

Tips: Paranoia and lots of detailed Non-Player Characters coupled with steampunk/sorcery espionage are key here. If the characters are going undercover, then the Non-Player Characters should be the ones they are trying to fool; if they are going on missions, then have their superiors and allies be the ones they are paranoid about.

Masters:

- ⊗ The characters are in charge of dispensing 'justice' in a small town, which basically amounts to whipping some and accepting bribes from others.

However, there is a spy from a rival House in the town, who will try to build support for armed revolution – or lynch mob – if the characters are too nasty.

- ⊗ The characters discover they will soon be attacked by raiders. They need to come up with a defensive strategy to protect their holding. How do you turn, say, a pipe factory into a defensive redoubt?

Tips: The basic challenge here is for the characters not to mess everything up. Do not be afraid to throw apparently insurmountable challenges at the characters; forcing them to come up with creative uses for their resources is the way to run this style of play.

Conquerors:

- ⊗ The characters will soon face a superior force in battle. How do they even the odds – spread disease? Subvert enemy leaders? Lure them into a trap?
- ⊗ The path of their conquest is blocked by an enemy fortress. Besieging it will be very costly; can they find a more cunning way to conquer it?

Tips: This is basically Games Master-Vs-Players; the trick is not to use the mighty power of the Games Master unfairly. When playing the Non-Player Characters, play them to the hilt with every dirty trick and tactic you can think of. For the most part though, once the Non-Player Characters' tactics have been settled on, the Games Master should then be as neutral as possible when actually running the war.

Rulers:

- ⊗ The characters need more souls. Where do they obtain them? Do they risk leaving their domain to head to an uncontrolled soul field or raid a neighbour's stocks?
- ⊗ The characters are the chieftains of an Early tribe. The tribe's fortress has been found by demons; do they make their stand there in the caves or do they risk going out into the wilderness with their old and sick to search for a new home?

Tips: Force the Players into choosing between bad options and compromises. As rulers, everything they do is going to injure someone, so the Players are

going to make enemies just by existing.

Local Events:

- ⊗ A noble from House Riethii succumbed to a Glabretchi poison and has lost its memory. It is rumoured to be wandering lost somewhere in the region. If the characters can find the noble before the poison wears off, they might be able to win a favour from the Riethii.

- ⊗ A natural disaster hits the area, throwing everything into chaos. What do the characters do to survive, and do they use the confusion to deal with their enemies?

Tips: See *Book of the Conqueror's*

Random Domain Events table for event ideas.

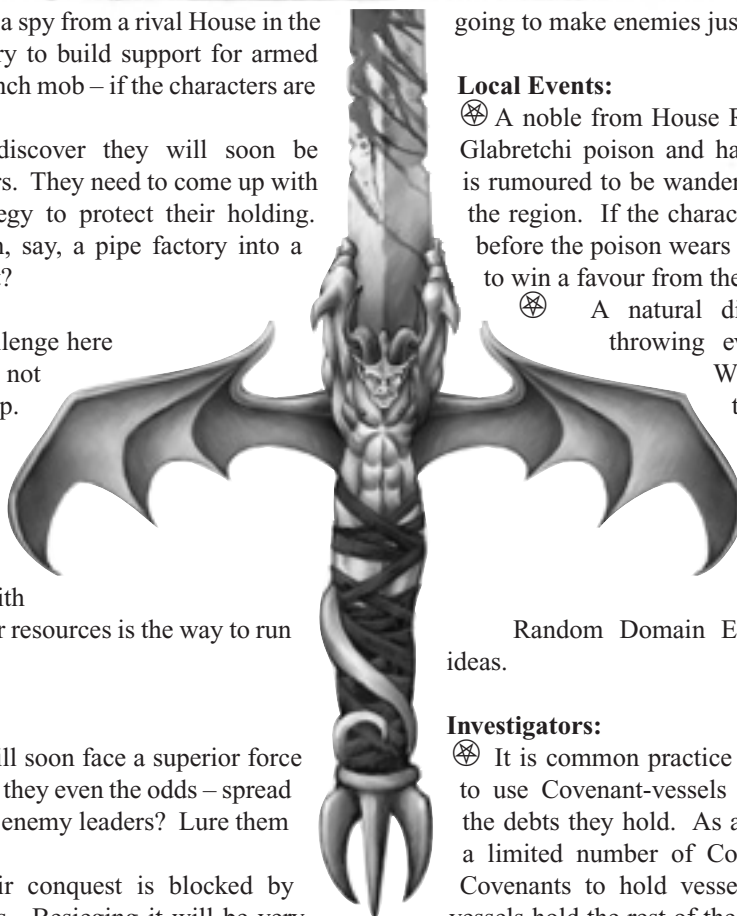
Investigators:

- ⊗ It is common practice for influential demons to use Covenant-vessels to help them manage the debts they hold. As a demon can only hold a limited number of Covenants, it uses these Covenants to hold vessels in thrall and these vessels hold the rest of the demon's debts. When a Lord needs to call on a Covenant, he summons a vessel and has the Covenant transferred to him. However, one of a Lord's vessels has vanished. Has it somehow managed to break its bonds and escape with the Covenants it holds, or was it kidnapped?
- ⊗ A sorcerer has been murdered and the only witness is a demon the sorcerer bound into a weapon. However, the weapon was stolen and used by the killer. The characters must track down this weapon, which has been discarded. Once they get the weapon, however, other investigators will blame them for the crime.

Tips: When running mystery games, do not bother about how the characters will actually solve it initially; just work out what clues are left behind, then add clues and ways for the characters to get them. Instead, the mystery itself should be a void at the heart of the scenario that the Players fill through deduction.

On a Quest:

- ⊗ The characters find the tomb of a legendary demon of great power. Some demons prefer not to be thrown into the pits, so they have their servants lock them in huge trap-filled tombs. As they investigate the tomb, it becomes evident that



the demon actually intended the tomb to preserve itself; its life force has slowly been regenerating over the centuries and now it is very, very hungry.

- ⊗ A map that the characters are following turns out to be very old; a hellgout has dumped a small sea from the mortal world right in the middle of it. How to they get to the bottom of it?

Tips: As a quest game is basically a long build-up to the end of the quest, the Games Master should come up with whatever grandiose dramatic set-pieces he can. The end of a quest arc should utterly change (or end) the campaign. Every major character and plot thread built up during the quest should be resolved in the big finale.

Plot Development

Once you have the basic plot idea, the next phase is development. Detail the Non-Player Characters' statistics and motivations. Come up with the full details of the plot. There is no need to be especially complex or elaborate; Players can make walking down to the shops into a thing of chaos and carnage. The Games Master's attention should be focused on portraying the Non-Player Characters, coming up with vile details, descriptions locations and plots, having one or two big twists and hooking the Players.

Involving the Characters

Why are the characters involved in the scenario? In some campaign structures, such as Servants of a Faction or Servants of a Patron, the characters will be handed their missions by their superior and have little choice but to get involved. Similarly, characters who need to trade their skills for illiaster will get involved when hired.

For other characters, getting them involved is more difficult. Just introducing the characters into a scenario is easy enough – they can run across some Non-Player Character by chance who drags them in. If the plot revolves around a sorcerer whose obsession with a runaway mortal slave is leaving the demon House he serves vulnerable, then the characters could begin by encountering that slave or attacking demons within the House warding. The difficult part is keeping the characters involved. They can be forced to stay, if they stand to lose something or be punished or injured if they fail. Alternatively, they can stand to receive a reward if they succeed (it is possible, even likely for low-Corruption mortals and angels, that the characters might stay involved because they care about others, or want the right side to win, or have some sense of honour; demons, however, tend

to be so selfish that you need to give them some extra motivation).

Hooking the Players

Just as important as involving the characters is hooking the Players. The Players need some stake in the game too – an interesting puzzle to solve, emotional engagement with a Non-Player Character, a chance to improve their characters or advance their story. Player enthusiasm is very important for a successful game; if the Players are not having fun, then change the style of campaign or find out what they dislike about the game. *Infernum's* brutish and cruel nature means that the characters will often suffer, be injured or humiliated, or forced to serve their enemies. Indeed, character against character battles and betrayals will almost certainly crop up during the game – but as long as the Players are still having fun, they will accept their characters suffering, being tortured, having their entrails extracted, being made to lick the mud from a slaver's foot and so on.

Adversaries

Infernum adversaries come in several basic types.

Cannon fodder: Give the characters something to slaughter in droves. Small spawn, low-level demons, damned slaves – a game should have plenty of carnage. Individual cannon fodder will not pose much of a threat to the characters; even groups should be defeated with only a little bit of luck. Cannon fodder are generally no higher than 1st or 2nd level.

Use cannon fodder to reinforce the brutal, horrific nature of the *Infernum* and to let even low-level characters have someone to control with Influencing, Covenants, Possession and so on.

Guards and Minor Threats: Guards and minor threats like wandering spawn-monsters, minor barbarians and so on can injure the characters, but not seriously. They should be around 3rd to 10th level, depending on the levels of the characters. Minor threats include henchmen for villains, guards at most House facilities, enemy foot soldiers and so on.

Use minor threats as the commanders of cannon fodder, to slow the characters down and to show them they are on the right track. A rising threat level should be a sign that the characters are making progress in a scenario.

Major Threats: Major threats are things that that can kill the characters if they are taken unawares, or that are unstoppable unless the characters use a particular

tactic. Major threats should be of level equal to the characters or one to three levels higher.

Use major threats to force the characters to work together (a handy trick for *Infernum* Games Masters).

Counterparts: Counterparts are other demons on a par with the characters. They are not necessarily a threat in combat, but they have skills in other areas that equal or exceed that of the characters. Having a few Non-Player Characters that are on exactly the same level as the characters does not make them any less special, but reminds them that the *Infernum* is a vicious power struggle between peers.

Greater Threats: Greater threats are even bigger than major threats, being four or more levels higher than the characters. Reserve greater threats as the big adversaries of a whole plot arc or campaign stage. Fighting a greater threat is almost suicidal unless the characters prepare for the battle, and even then luck had better be on their side.

Locations

Having encounters in memorable locations helps the game almost as much as clever tactics or well-acted Non-Player Characters. Fortunately, Hell offers a host of environments with which to threaten the characters.

The wilderness of Hell has many different types of environment, some of which are similar to those found on Earth. Hellish ones tend to be more dangerous and somewhat more lifeless, but the characters could still find themselves fighting in:

- ⊗ Hellish jungles on the Fifth or Seventh Circles, where the trees have limbs like serpents that coil around those who pass too near to them, and huge insects that feed on wastrel souls flit, screaming through the air.
- ⊗ Ravines on the spider-haunted Second Circle, all covered in webs and spider-swarms.
- ⊗ Gas marshes on the Third, where the rising gases from rotting corpses in the mire cause islands of knotted bones and vegetation to rise into the air and float for a while before exploding.

- ⊗ The blasted desert of the Seventh Circle, where the sun sears the ground until it melts into glass.
- ⊗ The glacial wastes of the Second Circle, where avalanches and icefalls are common.
- ⊗ The rust-caves of the Sixth Circle, with stalactites of industrial waste and melted metal.

Each environment should have effects on skills, combat and so on. Call for Balance checks, give penalties or bonuses to various attack forms or mutations or have the characters take rising damage from environment effects.

Designing Hazards

Like monsters, hazards and environmental effects have a Challenge Rating. The following guidelines will help in determining what the effects of a hazard should be. If the hazard inflicts half damage on a successful roll and full damage on a failed roll, then choose hazards up to the Challenge Rating. If a hazard allows its effects to be partially avoided (half damage) using a successful saving throw or skill check, then choose effects up to the listed challenge rating +3. If the hazard inflicts full damage on a failed roll and none on a successful roll, then choose effects up to the challenge rating +6.

SKILL CHECK REQUIRED



1	10	11	26	21	35
2	12	12	27	22	37
3	13	13	28	23	38
4	15	14	29	24	39
5	16	15	30	25	41
6	18	16	30	26	42
7	20	17	31	27	43
8	22	18	32	28	44
9	24	19	33	29	46
10	25	20	34	30	47

SAVING THROW REQUIRED

CR	Save DC	CR	Save DC	CR	Save DC
1	11	11	22	21	33
2	12	12	23	22	34
3	13	13	24	23	35
4	14	14	25	24	36
5	15	15	26	25	37
6	16	16	27	26	38
7	17	17	28	27	39
8	18	18	29	28	40
9	19	19	30	29	41
10	20	20	31	30	42

DAMAGE DEALT

CR	Damage	CR	Damage	CR	Damage
1	1d6+2	11	4d8+8	21	7d10+14
2	1d8+2	12	4d10+8	22	8d6+18
3	1d10+2	13	5d6+10	23	8d8+18
4	2d6+4	14	5d8+10	24	8d10+18
5	2d8+4	15	5d10+10	25	10d6+22
6	2d10+4	16	6d6+10	26	10d8+22
7	3d6+6	17	6d8+10	27	10d10+22
8	3d8+6	18	6d10+10	28	12d6+26
9	3d10+6	19	7d6+14	29	12d8+26
10	4d6+8	20	7d8+14	30	12d10+26

Complications

Ability Damaged (Temporary Loss): 1d4 points per 5 levels of CR.

Ability Drained (Permanent Loss): 1 point per 5 levels of CR.

Blinded: Blinded for one round: CR3. Blinded for 1d6 rounds: CR4. Blinded for longer: 1d6 rounds per +2 CR. Permanently blinded: CR14.

Dazed: Dazed for one round: CR½.

Dazzled: Dazzled for one round: CR¼. Dazzled for multiple rounds: 1d6 rounds per CR level.

Deafened: Deafened for 1d6 rounds: CR2. Deafened for longer: 1d6 rounds per +2 CR. Permanently

deafened: CR10.

Death: CR20.

Disease: Use the ability damage CRs, but reduce the CR by 3.

Drowning: CR7.

Energy Damage: CR+1.

Entangled: CR5.

Fascinated: CR1 for 1d4 rounds; +1d4 rounds per +1 CR.

Frightened: CR1 for 1 round; +1d4 rounds per +2 CR.

Nauseated: CR2 for 1 round; +1 round per +1 CR.

Panicked: CR 2 for 1 round; +1d4 rounds per +1 CR.

Paralysed: CR4 for 1 round; +1d6 rounds per +4 CR.

Poisoned: Use ability score damage, but reduce the CR by 2.

Prone: Knocking a character prone is CR1.

Shaken: CR1 for 1d4 rounds; +1d6 rounds per +1 CR.

Sickened: CR1 for 1d4 rounds; +1d6 rounds per +1 CR.

Sin: Sin Ratings do not have a Challenge Rating per se, as demons cannot gain Corruption and some characters do not mind becoming more corrupt. For games where the characters are trying to avoid corruption, then the SR is equally to two-thirds the CR.

Stunned: CR1 for 1 round; +1d4 rounds per +2 CR.

Unconsciousness: CR6.

For example: a gas trap on the Third Circle explodes if the characters do anything that might set it off. The Games Master wants a CR8 hazard. He decides that a Reflex save is appropriate. Checking the Saving Throw table for CR8, this is a DC18 save.

The saving throw will allow the characters to take half damage, so the total CR of damage and conditions inflicted by the hazard is CR11. He chooses Nausea for 3 rounds (CR5) and CR7 damage (3d6+6). If the characters set off the trap, they are Nauseated for one round and take 3d6+6 damage (half on a successful saving throw).

The ability of hellgouts to draw places and structures from the mortal world allows the Games Master to put any structure he wants in Hell. The characters could face dangers in:

- ⊗ Medieval castles
- ⊗ Decaying churches or cathedrals
- ⊗ Abandoned orphanages or asylums
- ⊗ Ruined factories
- ⊗ Military bases, surrounded by barbed wire

Challenges and Challenge Ratings

A challenge is an encounter where the characters have to overcome an obstacle, where failing to beat it will have dire consequences for the characters. It should consume some of their resources (hit points, illiaster and so on) or put penalties on them (such as Covenants). A creature with a Challenge Rating equal to that of the party should consume about a fifth of their resources.

Two creatures are roughly on a par with a single creature of their CR+2, four for a creature of CR+4, eight for a creature of CR+8 and so on. For mixed pairs, assume a creature who is three levels lower than its partner raises the partner's effective CR by +1. For example, a CR6 and a CR3 creature are together roughly CR7. The same applies to hazards and so on.

When giving experience, work out the experience for each creature individually, then divide it among the surviving party members, as described in *Book of the Damned*.

- ⊗ Isolated villages or hamlets
- ⊗ Midwestern small towns

Finally, the hellkin themselves and the other denizens of the Pit offer other arenas for encounters:

- ⊗ Fortresses
- ⊗ Torture Palaces
- ⊗ Early tribe fastnesses
- ⊗ Duelling arenas
- ⊗ Pleasure gardens

Complications & Twists

Every game should have some complication or twist to make it different and memorable.

- ⊗ **Betrayal:** The characters will be betrayed by whatever group they are most closely aligned to.
- ⊗ **Confusion:** Someone messed up – the characters miss an important piece of information.
- ⊗ **Third Party Attack:** An initially uninvolved group attacks the characters.
- ⊗ **Disease:** A disease is spreading in the area.
- ⊗ **Lost Item:** An item required to achieve one of the party's goals is missing and must be retrieved.
- ⊗ **Missing Item:** An item required has been destroyed and the characters must find or make a replacement.
- ⊗ **Stolen Item:** An item required has been stolen and the characters must solve the crime and recover the item.
- ⊗ **Terrain Difficulties:** The terrain is dangerous in some fashion.
- ⊗ **Weather Difficulties:** The area is suffering from dangerous or unpleasant weather.

- ⊗ **Mechanical Difficulties:** Some device or weapon needed by the characters must be repaired.
- ⊗ **Divided Allies:** The group the characters are most closely aligned to is divided against itself – the characters are given conflicting advice or assistance.
- ⊗ **Divided Enemies:** The opposition is divided – the characters must be careful not to be the catalyst that reunites them.
- ⊗ **Social Interference:** Existing political or social debts or Covenants restrict how the characters can act.
- ⊗ **Magical Interference:** Magical phenomena or practitioners interfere with the characters' actions.
- ⊗ **Old Grudges:** A Non-Player Character enemy of the Players shows up, working with an opposing faction.
- ⊗ **Time Limit:** The characters are faced with a time limit.
- ⊗ **Opposing Group:** Another party of characters, similar to those of the Players, is working for the opposition.
- ⊗ **Opposing Force:** Another military force is working for the opposition.

Rewards

Successfully completing a scenario brings rewards to the characters. A character's power level and status should be fairly fluid in an *Infernum* game; let the characters rise and fall quickly by giving big rewards and punishing them severely for failure, especially at higher levels.

Experience

The rules for experience are given in *Book of the Damned*, but the Games Master should also give experience bonus awards. Some of these awards are already detailed, such as the increases for humiliating an opponent, conquering a fortress, rising in noble rank and so on, but the Games Master should also give awards for:

- ⊗ Good roleplaying
- ⊗ Amusing or horrific descriptions
- ⊗ Keeping other Players amused
- ⊗ Keeping other Players in the game (by not killing their characters, saving lives etc)

Items & Resources

Soulbound weapons and armour will increase a character's power, but not significantly. It is assumed that from around 10th level on, characters will have relatively easy access to bound weapons. Other useful devices such as implanted iliaster reserves, surgical enhancement and more mutations will also increase a character's personal power.

Money, in the form of gold, iliaster, crowns or souls is another reward. Up until around 10th level, try to keep the character's wealth under control – no more than 10 crowns per character level is ideal, and even less in games where a scarcity of resources is a problem. Ideally, the characters should not be in danger of not being able to afford iliaster as a matter of course but they should have to worry about their finances if they spend more than a few weeks without finding cash. A demon's iliaster requirement should be a constant drain on their resources.

If a characters' wealth or resources get too high, then steps can easily be taken to put them back in order. The Hellish economy lurches wildly, depending on the whims of the Carthenay and the current iliaster supply. A demon Lord might become jealous of its subjects becoming too wealthy and impose punitive or ludicrous taxes. The Infernum is an unfair and brutal place – while the Games Master is obliged to be as fair as possible, the Non-Player Characters can be as cruel as they wish.

Influence & Covenants

Characters can also gain influence and standing in their faction through successfully completing scenarios. Demons and corrupt characters can even hold Covenants over their rivals. Temporary influence should be on the order of a +4 bonus to Influencing

checks for a while, although most demons will convert this into a Covenant as soon as possible.

Holdings & Titles

In general, holdings and titles should *not* be given as scenario rewards. Instead, let the characters work towards such things on their own. Instead of running a game where the characters can win a barony at the end of it, let a Player organise a party who go off and conquer a barony or build the political support necessary to be granted a barony.

Repercussions

The final 'reward' that should be considered are the repercussions of the events in the scenario. What have the characters done? Who have they angered or pleased? Did they leave survivors who might come after them or mysteries left unsolved? What plot threads can be included in future scenarios?

General Advice & Notes

The following notes cover Games Mastering situations unique to *Infernum*.

Describing Hell

Physically, the Pit itself is an upside-down cone, with the characters living on the inside surface. Therefore, a character who looks straight up from any of the Circles (except the Ninth at the very bottom) will see the far side of the Pit. Gravity pulls towards the walls, except in the centre of the Pit where a faller will plummet right down to the bottom.

The look of the Infernum is taken from all the classic imagery of Hell. Chains of black iron and walls of black stone are everywhere, lit by roaring sulphurous flames. The sun overhead is swollen and red and ugly; the wind stinks and carries the sound of souls in torment. Space and time are twisted in the Infernum; while characters will only rarely encounter such distortions of distance or reality, they do happen.

While the Infernum is almost universally ghastly, with the demons competing to be as depraved, sadistic and monstrous as they can, the Games Master should not belabour this point. It is much more effective to have a single memorable image of torment and evil in a place than just mentioning the souls screaming and the hooks and the chains and the blood all the time.

Covenants

Covenants are vital to Infernal society; they hold the demons together. They are a strange tool, but one that the Games Master should be aware of.

- ⊗ **Maximum Covenants:** A character cannot hold more Covenants than its Wisdom and Charisma bonuses totalled together. As this is rarely more than two or three for most demons, vassals have to be used to hold all a Lord's Covenants. Most demons prefer to sell off low-Strength Covenants for cash, instead of wasting a slot on them.
- ⊗ **Forcing Commands:** A demon can give a command to a Covenanted victim. If the command is obeyed, nothing happens. If the victim resists, however, there is a chance the Covenant will rise or fall depending on the victim's Will save. Demons therefore tend to torture victims to drop their Wisdom down and reduce the victim's Will save bonus, then issue commands that the victim would prefer to resist, like killing friends or performing depraved acts. Through this technique, a relatively weak Covenant can be increased into something much more valuable.
- ⊗ **Social Effects:** The defences and Influencing bonuses offered by a strong Covenant are to most demons the really valuable effects. These really only come into play with strong Covenants, but can be useful even at low levels.
- ⊗ **Avoiding Covenants:** Almost every Covenanted effect requires that the Covenant-holder be present or give the victim a command. The main exception is that the debtor cannot act against the holder, but this restriction can be overcome with a Will save. Therefore, it is rare for demons to kill their own Covenant-holders; instead, assassins are used. The Covenant-holder wants to see its debtors as often as possible so it can use its powers on them; the debtor wants to avoid the holder as much as possible. Some Lords even secretly transfer valuable Covenants to other demons and then send those demons to outlying courts to renew bonds.

Troubleshooting

It is possible that an *Infernum* game will go out of control. Here are some common problems and solutions:

- ⊗ **Player Vs Player:** This normally occurs in demon-centric games. The Players are in conflict and one of them is basically pushing the others around. While this makes sense in character, it is not exactly fun for the demons who are at the bottom of the pile. *Solution:* Come up with plots that will give the lesser characters a chance to shine and put the dominant characters at a disadvantage. If

a hulk is smashing all the other characters around and forcing them into Covenants with brute force and Intimidation, have them sent to a court where the imps and malcubi can thrive.

- ⊗ **Characters Running Riot:** The characters are combat/social/military monsters who are killing everything/dominating everything/having their army kill everything. In most games, the solution is to attack the problem obliquely, dealing with social characters through combat and so on. In *Infernum*, however, the bigger hammer is always an option. The Houses are the great powers of the Infernum and they will turn on anyone who threatens their power. The characters should always have to deal with the Houses; the only way to succeed in the Pit is to deal with the devils and come to arrangements with at least some of the Nine.
- ⊗ **Everything's Horrible, What's the Point:** The malaise normally hits mortal or angelic games. The characters are in Hell, outnumbered by millions of demons. Heaven has rejected them, evil rules the whole setting, there is torment and suffering everywhere and nothing they do seems to make a difference. The key is showing the light amidst the darkness; let the characters have little triumphs and see things that are positive and good, even in Hell.
- ⊗ **Characters Getting Slaughtered:** This is the flipside of the 'characters running riot' problem; the characters have drawn too much attention from their enemies and are being overwhelmed. Possible solutions:
 1. The enemy do not kill the characters, but instead Covenant them. The characters now have to somehow find a way to break these Covenants.
 2. Enemies of the enemy help the characters and form an alliance.
 3. The characters find some refuge or escape which gives them a breathing space and time to plan.

Demons

The most common denizens of the Infernum, the demons are always pretty well defined through their breeds and Houses. Infernal society is a mix of several elements:

- ⊗ Firstly, demons are twisted, horrible, *wrong* creatures – they are born of an unnatural union and have desires and emotions that are far stronger and uglier than those of humans. They are not utterly corrupt, but can barely conceive of positive things like trust, love and hope. They see these things as delusions.

Demon Names

Demon names are largely random agglomerations of syllables. Some are based on angelic names; others on mortal myths, but most are just whatever word-sound the larval demon happened to utter when asked its name. For quick reference, here are some classic demon names, drawn from a variety of sources:

Andrealphus	Dagon	Murmur	Tchort
Apollyon	Decarabia	Naberios	Thamuz
Baphomet	Furcas	Naphula	Uphir
Barqu	Geryon	Nysrogh	Valafar
Belial	Gorgo	Opach	Orias
Beng	Kasdeya	Orias	Veltis
Bile	Kobal	Paymon	Verdelet
Budsturga	Kostchtchie	Raum	Verin
Buer	Lucifuge	Rimmon	Vetis
Caacrinolaas	Malphas	Sargatanas	Zagam
Choronzon	Melchom	Sonnilion	Zeernebooch
Clauneck	Mormo	Succorbenoth	Zepar

- ⊗ They are, however, jealous of humans on a subconscious level and tend to ape human behaviour.
- ⊗ The basic structure of demonic society is feudal, although the farther one goes from the settled areas, the more monstrous and brutal the demons get. Renegades living in the wilderness have no culture whatsoever; they just torture souls and feast.
- ⊗ The lower classes of the demons are oppressed and crushed by their overlords. Most demons just try to avoid the wrath of their masters but are more than willing to take advantage of any opportunities for carnage and inflicting pain.
- ⊗ The upper classes of the demons style themselves on human nobles. Politeness and refinement are considered desirable – but the demons mostly lack mortal restraint or modesty. The demons are a mix of Victorian etiquette and behaviour, mixed with the most debauched excesses possible.
- ⊗ Finally, the Free City demons are obviously based on revolutionary France, with elements of Orwell thrown in for good measure.

Be lavish with your physical descriptions of demons; *Infernum*'s horror is rarely subtle. There is little creeping, lurking horror; the characters are in Hell, so go over the top when necessary. While there is a place for subtlety and carefully crafted atmosphere in the game, do not be afraid to be blatant.

Mutations

Dealing with demonic mutations is another problem for the Games Master. Every demon has at least as many mutations as its level, which equates to a *lot* of special powers and abilities to keep track of. While an important Non-Player Character should have all its mutations determined in advance, it is easier to just to roll randomly on the spot for the mutations of a generic demon the characters happen to meet. One trick is to roll one random mutation, then pick a few chosen mutations to support that; this allows the Games Master to quickly distinguish Non-Player Characters. For example, the characters meet a slaver. The Games Master rolls for a random mutation and gets an 83 – the Chain of Usury, which deals with Covenants. This implies the demon is a social manipulator, so the Games Master quickly gives the demon a few links in the Chain of Lies. If the Games Master had rolled a 95 for the Chain of Wrath instead, then he would give the demon combat abilities like the

Chain of Living Armour.

As an aside – rolling for random mutations is fun, which is why it is part of the demon advancement process. However, a few lucky rolls on the table can give one character a great advantage over his less fortunate peers; keep an eye on the Players' results and take steps to keep the characters close to balanced with each other.

Mortal Names

Mortal names vary wildly.

Slave	Barbarian	Harrower
Abd	Bor	Edward
Cull	Darragh	Geoffrey
Dog	Eilish	Magalena
Magg	Fiachra	Marcus
Noth	Kern	Robert
Nox	Niamh	Samuel
Slattern	Nula	Tobias
Uther	Scia	Valorie

Mortals

The mortals of the Infernum are a mix of Faustian sorcerers (whose inspiration is obvious), *Conan*-esque barbarians, *Dune*-inspired survival-oriented barbarians, modern-day refugees, medieval Christian knights and slaves.

In each case, humans know they are second-class citizens in Hell, so they are dominated by fear or hatred of the demons. If demons and humans are in the same party, try to channel this hatred into a simmering rivalry or grudging respect.

Corruption

The mortal attitude to Corruption varies. Some mortals embrace it, becoming as demonic as possible to get respect and power in the Pit. Most organised mortal groups reject it as it leaves them open to demonic taint and control. The threat of Corruption should be a constant worry for most mortals and the Games Master should emphasise its changes and dangerous effects; choosing to become Corrupt and get those nice bonus mutations should not be the obviously best path in a campaign. Mortal characters should face a hard choice between Corruption and purity.

Fate

The mortal ability to alter fate can be a headache for the Games Master if it gets out of hand. Fortunately, few mortals bother to set up fate pools or anything complicated like that; most just keep a few points of iliaster for boosting rolls or stabilising. Few mortals can generate iliaster more than once a day.

If the Players are using fate pools a lot, then have them attacked by lots of demons when their iliaster stocks are low. Fate pools are supposed to be a useful backup tool, not a primary means of attack for mortals. If the amount of bookkeeping and second-guessing caused by the pools is slowing down the game, make fate pools less desirable.

Angels

Almost all angels in Hell have a slightly shell shocked air to them, as if they have not completely accepted the unfairness of being thrown into the Pit. They also have an ineffable nobility and grace. No movement or word is wasted. Angels are almost never confused or fazed; their sense of purpose suffuses them. Try to avoid ever letting angels seem base or human; they are of a higher, more perfect order. Their corruption, therefore, should be a terrible and unnatural thing. Even when fallen, they should retain this terrible glory and purpose, only transfigured into darkness.

Angel names

The tradition used for angel names is to have them in ‘-el’, meaning ‘of God’. To take some names from the classic *Dictionary of Angels*, including the *Fallen Angels* (by Gustav Davidson – a full *Infernum* bibliography of sources and inspirational texts will be included in *Book of the Conqueror*).

Akriel	Leliel
Araxiel	Mastema
Asmodel	Omiel
Bael	Pusiel
Eisheth Zenumim	Turel

Angels also take names from mortal lore or as titles – hence Purity or the Angel of the Hoarfrost.

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INFERNUM

BOOK OF THE TORMENTOR

WITH A ROAR, THE OBLURENT CAVALRY CHARGED. HUGE SPAWN WITH PLATES OF BONE BOLTED TO THEIR HIDES LUTTERED DOWN THE SLOPE. OBLURENT DETITIONS WITH LANCES AND BILE RIFLES CLUNG TO THEIR FLANKS, THEIR EYES GRITTYLY FIXED ON THE STURRACH LINES. THE RANKS OF THE STURRACH LOWERED THEIR GUNS; FIVE HUNDRED HELLCANNONS, BILE RIFLES AND SHATTERGUNS WERE LEVELLED AT THE RUSHING CAVALRY. CROWDED INTO THE NARROW VALLEY, THERE WAS NO CHANCE OF MISSING.

Infenum: Book of the Tormentor is the setting and Game Master's guide to the Infenum Roleplaying Game. It includes:

History, giving the publicly known history of the Infenum – if not the publicly accepted history – as well as details on timekeeping, festivals and day-to-day life in the Pit.

Infernography is a Circle-by-Circle overview of the whole Pit and the regions beyond.

Factions & Powers gives a write-up of all the major factions in the Pit, such as the Nine Houses, the mortal tribes and many others.

Adversaries, gives monsters and Non-Player Characters to challenge the Players with.

Campaigning provides campaign ideas and Game Mastering advice tailored to the Infenum setting.

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