



Hellbound

*A Sorcerer setting
by Dav Harnish*

Disclosure Agreements, by Dav Harnish

“Birthed of Annihilation,
Raised on Acceleration.”
-Cruciform Injection, *Black Tides*

It was not a particularly dark and stormy night. Actually, it was quite pleasant, weather-wise. The sky was quickly dimming to another stunning sunset, and people were already arriving at their homes after a long day's work.

Jonathan Lane, however, was just getting started. He watched the evening ritual of rush hour wind to a close, as the cars along the expressway began to hurtle forward at speeds that rendered them all but a blur to his aging eyes. Tchaikovsky lilted calmly in the background, building to a crescendo that seemed to pace itself with the growing momentum of the commuters and the sole other rider of the limousine's agitation.

Finally, after closing his eyes to lose himself a moment within the catastrophic conclusion of the symphony, Jonathan paused the music and set an unwavering eye on his fellow passenger, who even now looked hungry and feral beneath his attempted veneer of tailored clothing and brandy-sipping.

Jonathan did not like this person. It was nothing personal. He was like that. Jonathan had always been a man who prided himself on his instinct, and something about this passenger rubbed him the wrong way.

So, he let his stare convey benign distaste without seeming openly hostile. After all, the man across from him was, at age 29, the youngest executive of Celestial Resorts, Incorporated. Jonathan himself had labored a long and difficult 15 years to attain that coveted position. Now, at 52, with the comforts of life surrounding him, he found himself wondering if he would make that journey again.

He was the oldest executive. The others had made their money and retired early. Jonathan, however, unwed, unhappy, and a Lutheran, had stayed in the business long after the money had slowed to a steady trickle from its original torrent. He was comfortable, and admittedly, that trickle salary was still in the upper five percent of incomes, but he could not shake the feeling that the other board members regarded him as a relic of the past. After all, he was of the Elder Ways. Religious. That was how this newer generation referred to it: Elder Ways. It was as if some dark and mysterious force had clouded the minds of their parents and manipulated them into some savage worshiping of some eldritch spirit.

Jonathan closed his eyes and exhaled slowly; he could feel that his face was beginning to betray the disgust he felt. The new generation did not care for such "unbalancing." Their faces were always impassive, a mask of someone in contemplation, or, as Jonathan liked to think of it: the Shitting Face.

The young man across from him was a master of it. Finally, Jonathan lit a cigar. A slight narrowing of the lips indicated the youngster's displeasure; Jonathan could not help allowing a slight smile to pull at one side of his mouth.

"So, why are we being sent to pick this guy up?" The youngster finally asked.

"I am going," Jonathan replied, making it seem that he was about to explain something that would be entirely incomprehensible to the young man, "because the man was once my closest friend."

Jonathan allowed a significant pause before continuing with an air of pride, "And I always respect such ties."

The youngster let out a slight chuckle, "The man may have once been your friend, but now he's some nut-case."

Jonathan's mind toyed with the mental images of the young man thrown forcefully from the speeding limousine, but contained his emotions long enough to say, "Do not forget, child, that this man is the only person who can relay what happens on the other side of Cerberus Gate. So you may want to refrain from such an attitude."

The young man looked ready to speak when Jonathan raised a hand to forestall any comment, "You may also want to refrain from such a response since this man has reportedly killed and eaten his last liaison, and used the larger arteries and intestines as sex toys."

The man's face paled slightly. Obviously he had his secretary brief him on the report and she was too refined to resort to such graphic detail. Jonathan counted himself a cut above those who used live secretaries, thinking them ridiculous cretins needing to exert their power over fellow man. Jonathan used an electronic secretary: Elecretary, Version 4.2.

Jonathan drove the knife a little deeper as he dropped his voice to a stage whisper to utter, "I hear he's gone native."

He hit the pause button on the music again, allowing the random disc selector to choose another symphony. His grin widened a little as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony drowned the young man's startled response.

The brief repast and soaring music gave Jonathan a chance to reminisce. He recalled when he was the age of the young man before him. He could not recall the year, but he knew the date well; January 14th. Scholars debated whether or not this date is significant beyond the marking of the first day of "Full Disclosure." To Jonathan, it was a chance to begin anew.

He had worked as a mutual fund salesman. Nothing too grandiose and definitely nothing taxing his mind to search for information learned in his six years of college. Jonathan was one of the many with a Masters of Business Administration, or MBA, as those thousands of teeming, self-important icons enjoyed abbreviating it. To Jonathan, however, it signified a bitter defeat in his life. Six years wasted. Six years and he was nothing better than a phone salesman.

But then, on the Day of Full Disclosure, it became a new life for him. The light slashed across the Chicago skyline. It was a bright orange flare. The source of the light was never actually made public to the plebeian masses, but within hours, the true meaning of its appearance had been relayed to everyone. The gates had opened.

Only the Pope and a handful of others actually spoke to the celestial beings that claimed to come from Heaven and Hell. Jonathan never had. But, once the message was relayed to the public, and the panic of Judgement Day died away, it was seen as any other phenomenon. It was opportunity.

The transition from Judgement Day panic to opportunity took years. To this day, the fervor had not died away completely. Perhaps he was becoming as jaded as this new

generation, seeing himself so far above the others. But then, of all the delegates, political, religious, and personal, only the business venture proposed by Celestial Resorts, Incorporated was ever accepted by both of the two locations.

And so the company began. Jonathan left his job as a mutual fund salesman to join the fledgling company. He went from public liaison to executive in fifteen years, a long time to wait, but worth it. Now this 29-year-old upstart sat before him, his very existence mocking everything Jonathan's long career represented. But, then, Jonathan had made friends along the way. Most of them gone, true, but those friends had children, and those children knew him as a surrogate uncle. He still had connections. A smile broke on Jonathan's face as he considered that fact. A glance toward the young man showed the slight downturn of the man's eyebrows as the only indication that the outpouring of emotion showing on Jonathan's face was not approved. The grin became a chuckle.

It would be good to see Kevin once more. The man had served Celestial Resorts almost as long as Jonathan had. He was the only man allowed to see the inner workings that occurred beyond Cerberus Gate. While Celestial Resorts maintained contracts for mining, entertainment licenses, and most of all, a resort palace known as Dis, no one had actually seen the full landscape of Hell.

Certainly, Jonathan and thousands of others had seen Dis, with its pools of fire and sky littered with swirling vapors. The palace itself was a giant pleasure den worthy of Las Vegas, and almost as corny. But the novelty of a resort in Hell proved a major marketing scheme. But, try as Celestial Resorts might, Abdiel, the litigator and spokesman for Hell refused any save the appointed liaison to witness Hell itself.

People bound for Dis were sent in a windowless transport, of course serviced by only the finest in wait-staff and featuring the latest movies. But of Hell itself, nothing was seen past Cerberus Gate. The giant black, wrought iron gates stood over eighty feet in height. They, themselves, seemed to be portals to Hell itself, as the gates rested on a small rise overlooking the Lincoln Park Zoo. Either side of the hill revealed nothing out of the ordinary. It seemed a gate stood senselessly in the midst of a park. Yet, when they opened, an acrid stench wafted throughout the neighborhood, reducing, of course, property value. Celestial Resorts had been forced to pay in excess of thirty-two million dollars to allow the gates to open on a semi-regular basis. The vapors were harmless; they merely stank of rotten eggs. But the sulfur fumes were not, as many thought, sulfur fumes at all. They were merely the pervading stench of Hell.

Looking past the gates, nothing was seen but the other side of the park. But when accompanied by the Hounds, those three-headed beasts that served as guardians, the transports and other vehicles seemed to vanish as they passed. Jonathan had seen the process three times, and been on only one voyage to Dis, but the memory remained firmly in his mind. A slight sense of unbalancing in the stomach, and then a ten-hour trip to Dis. No bumps, no jostling, and when the doors opened, a giant palace surrounded by two hundred-foot walls rested before the eyes. Complete with its own lake of fire.

The limousine stopped and the sound of the engine died away. Jonathan snapped himself from his musings to gaze out the window. Dusk, twilight, one of the two, Jonathan thought to himself, then realized that it was three in the afternoon. He inwardly laughed at himself as he lowered the tinted windows to allow the sunlight to pierce the interior of the vehicle.

The young executive across from Jonathan held an emotionless face as he spoke for the first time since Jonathan had snapped at him; “We seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot, Mr. Lane. My name is Sinclair Graves.”

The impeccably tailored suit wrinkled at all the correct places as the young man’s right arm extended slowly. Jonathan almost laughed in his face. He was an executive of the same company. He knew all the policies. Rule number three: if the client is too emotional, let professionalism and courtesy be your response.

Jonathan bit back a sarcastic reply and attempted to shape his expression into a similar mask of nonchalance as he shook the hand firmly, once. He gazed back out the window, looking upon the Cerberus Gate calmly. He reached into a pocket and lit a cigarette. The back of his mind told him that young Sinclair Graves would disapprove of the chemical dependence. Fuck him, Jonathan thought.

“When do they arrive?” asked Jonathan. He knew of course, 3:15 on the dot. Hell was nothing if not punctual. His watch read 3:03. He really had no idea why he asked the question. Sinclair, however, seemed pleased to be recognized once more as he replied that it would be another twelve minutes. It seemed that Sinclair had thought to set his own watch to Hell’s clock as well.

The twelve minutes passed in uncomfortable silence as Jonathan returned to his musings.

The Pearly Gate was centered in Washington, D.C. The gates seemed well placed, surrounded by the alabaster and marble of the capital city. The gates only opened to those with a grievance license. The Immigration and Naturalization Services held authority for the grievance license. Only about two thousand were issued every year.

Jonathan had never personally been to Heaven, but he had heard that it was a mass of white and gold, crowded with angels and the departed souls of good people. Celestial Resorts had ceased any business arrangement with Heaven when it became apparent that Heaven held no natural resources, nor any decent marketplace save for those with excessive grief to witness the dead family members frolicking on clouds. Or whatever dead people did.

The grievance license was only issued to those with connections and a true grievance. Jonathan had heard that none ever saw God, and a nondisclosure agreement with the dead assured everyone that no one would hear about God until that moment of death.

That was, in the end, what destroyed religion. God did not want to speak to anyone it seemed. Eventually, people stopped wanting to speak to God. It became a sort of punishment through silence, Jonathan felt. But, then again, Jonathan was a Lutheran. He felt it was to preserve faith. He smiled briefly, attempting half-heartedly to shield the expression from Sinclair across from him. Perhaps this was all a test of the faithful.

A screeching drew Jonathan from his musings once more. A sound worse than nails across a chalkboard echoed loudly in the air. Jonathan cringed, and was satisfied to see that Sinclair’s perfectly expressionless face finally betrayed some hint of feeling, even if that feeling was pain. A pair of three-headed dogs strode from between the gates, with attendant growls issued at any who strayed too closely. The opening of Cerberus Gate, however, never seemed to draw a crowd. It had in the beginning, but now it was just an occurrence that filled the air with a stink that took days to filter away. So the

dogs snapped at nothing. Perhaps, thought Jonathan, they imagine the crowds that once lined the gates, giving the hounds a sense of duty.

Then the gates ceased, open wide to allow the transport to emerge. A large truck, the type used for the ore deliveries. Jonathan waited to see if anything else emerged. Nothing.

With a deep breath, Jonathan opened the door to the limousine and strode toward the truck. The driver, seemingly some human, gestured toward the trailer of the vehicle. Jonathan nodded and made his way toward the truck. A glance over his shoulder revealed Sinclair Graves trailing along slowly.

At the rear of the truck, one of the doors swung open to reveal a thin white hand gesturing the pair inside. Jonathan climbed in without a word, leaving Sinclair behind to determine the best manner of entering without dirtying his immaculate suit. Inside, an angel stood next to a hospital bed.

Jonathan recognized the figure as Abdiel. The angel stood calmly, wings folded delicately across his back. The wings themselves were stained and marred by the foul air and pollution of Hell, but the angel's skin shone as a pure white. Jonathan noted, as he had before, that Abdiel stood a full three inches above the trailer's floor, always hovering above whatever surface was beneath his feet.

Abdiel gestured toward the bed and spoke, "We had to sedate him for the trip. It seems that his condition is growing worse. We felt it best to return him to his home while he died."

Abdiel spoke with a casual air, waving negligently as he watched the reactions of the two executives. The younger Sinclair nodded silently, but Jonathan drew a stunned breath at the sight of his friend. The body on the bed was nothing more than a husk, barely alive. Bones showed clearly through sagging skin. Jonathan could see the atrophy of the musculature. The eyes were open; a steely, gray shade that Jonathan knew did not belong to his friend. Abdiel waited a moment longer then continued.

"We, naturally, require a new liaison if the contract with Celestial Resorts is to continue."

Jonathan glanced upward sharply; he had not been notified of this. Sinclair Graves stepped forward, shooting his cuffs and speaking clearly, "I will be the new liaison, appointed by the board of Celestial Resorts."

Jonathan jumped slightly, having forgotten that Sinclair was present. He nodded slowly, feeling, somehow, that he, not the young whelp, should be the new liaison, even as he reviled and feared the position that had destroyed his friend. Abdiel smiled and shook the man's hand.

"I will leave you two for a moment of privacy. A medical transport is coming from your Rush Memorial Hospital to move the body of poor Kevin Montgomery."

Jonathan looked at Sinclair and said, "Be careful over there, Sinclair. I knew Kevin a long time. The stories they tell about him shows a completely different man."

Sinclair sniffed disdainfully as he glanced at the body of Kevin Montgomery. He looked back at Jonathan and let the mask descend over his features once more, "I will be fine, Mr. Lane. There is no need for such outbursts. Your friend was aging. Perhaps he could no longer handle the stress of his job."

The insult was close to home for Jonathan. He narrowed his eyes and spoke calmly, "Fear not, kid. I have no desire to be liaison. The board could not give me that job for all the money in the world."

Sinclair smiled coldly as he said, "I have little doubt that we will never meet again, Mr. Lane."

Jonathan cocked an eyebrow and turned back toward his friend as the young executive left the trailer. He could see Abdiel speaking to the young man and nodding about something. Jonathan looked at the body of Kevin Montgomery and silently wondered if his friend would ever awaken.

As fate would have it, Kevin Montgomery never did awaken. Twenty days later, after lingering in a coma, Kevin died peacefully in his sleep. Jonathan was there, holding the man's hand at the last moment.

The call from Celestial Resorts came almost immediately after the doctor ushered Jonathan from the room. It was the board; he had been appointed liaison to Hell. It seemed that Jonathan and Sinclair Graves would meet one more time. Jonathan would oversee the transport of the body back home.

It seemed to Jonathan that the truck was the same transport that had returned the dying Kevin Montgomery to earth. Jonathan, and another young executive, who claimed that his name was Charles Kingston, watched the truck jerk to a halt just outside the gates. The young executive could have been a clone of Sinclair. But after a moment of reflection, Jonathan had to admit to himself that all the young executives looked the same to him.

As before, Abdiel stood patiently, nodding to Jonathan, and waiting for Charles to introduce himself, which he did with startling lack of emotion or inflection. Abdiel smiled and repeated the words he had spoken upon the last encounter, inserting only Sinclair's name for Kevin's. As he finished, Abdiel seemed to be awaiting some sort of response.

Jonathan shook himself slightly; he had been staring at Abdiel, who was clothed in the same garb, looking exactly as he had some twenty days earlier. He belatedly realized the question and stepped forward as Charles coughed slightly, attempting to chastise Jonathan for his lack of response, "I am the new representative, Mr. Abdiel."

The angel seemed slightly surprised at the revelation, clearly thinking that the younger Charles would be the natural liaison. After the slightest moment of shock, however, the angel nodded solemnly and said, "Please, I have no titles, Abdiel will suit me perfectly, sir."

Jonathan nodded even as Charles excused himself to give instructions to the driver of the truck. The young executive returned to the pair, undoubtedly having found that Abdiel had already made all the necessary arrangements for transportation of the corpse. Charles nodded in departure to the pair, flashing a slight glance of jealousy toward Jonathan, who silently shrugged as if to say, "I never wanted this."

"So, Abdiel, may I ask, how did Sinclair die?" The question was abrupt, Jonathan knew, but he had lived a good number of years, he felt he had earned the right to cut through the bullshit that swamped the speech and social niceties of the younger generation. Abdiel, for his part, pursed his lips, whether in annoyance or amusement,

however, was impossible to determine. It seemed to Jonathan that the angel had perhaps been the original source of the Shitting Face.

“You will be briefed as soon as we have you sign the nondisclosure agreements and contracts,” replied Abdiel, calmly stepping back toward the open gate. No other vehicles had accompanied the truck through, and Abdiel seemed to be avoiding the transport as a means of travel. Jonathan watched for some sign that he should follow the angel, but the filth-encrusted wings of the angel vanished through the gate without the figure making so much as a single glance backward. Steeling himself for the unknown, Jonathan stepped forward through the Cerberus Gate. In his mind, all he could think was: welcome to Hell.

There was little actual sensation to reveal that he had, in fact, stepped across worlds into the lands of eternal punishment. The stench of sulfur grew stronger, and the oppressive heat that seemed to pervade the land washed over him in a wave of humidity. Abdiel stood at the other end of the gate, which, in itself, seemed nothing more than a simple doorway as Jonathan stepped through.

The landscape was much as one familiar with old scripture and texts would surmise. A rocky land with streams of liquid fire dancing lazily about the environment summarized the landscape appropriately. The road, a generous appellation, upon which Abdiel and Jonathan stood seemed to be made of human skulls, but closer inspection showed that numerous types of skeletal remains provided the cobblestones for the path. Some bore stubby horns that had either been worn away with time, or broken from the passing of heavily vehicles or creatures. The sky was a hazy yellow, and smoke clouds hung thickly over their heads. The light seemed to come from everywhere: the sky, the streams of fire, and the occasional belching flame that sprouted from the ground.

This featureless terrain of rocky mountains and rivulets of fire continued as far as Jonathan could see, marred only by the path upon which his feet rested. Abdiel seemed to allow Jonathan a moment to become acclimated with his surroundings before interrupting the reverie with a silent chuckle and explanation, “The whole of the realm is not very similar to this. We stand near the Wastes, which is where much of the mining and factory work occurs.”

Jonathan nodded mutely. Even as Abdiel explained, the sound of metal scraping against rock and ore was apparent. The gnashing of teeth, thought Jonathan with a grimace. He looked at Abdiel, who seemed to be patiently studying Jonathan, hovering motionlessly over the skull pathway.

“Well, my friend, we should get moving I suppose,” spoke Jonathan, trying valiantly to keep any slight sign of quaver from his voice.

The angel nodded calmly and said, “That is a dangerous notion you have spoken, human. Unknowingly, I realize, but dangerous all the same. Words are binding here, should the listener choose to make them so.”

Jonathan’s face echoed the words that emerged from his mouth, “I am not certain I understand.”

“Good, your speech is already changing. Vagueness, ambiguity. These are the stock and trade of Hell. Should you say to me that I am your friend, which holds certain merit or value here, should I choose to exert it. I am a citizen of Hell as much as any demon. A special case, I realize, but still, I am a citizen nonetheless. By being a citizen, I can choose to bind you to your word,” explained Abdiel, serving only to confuse the

man before him further. The angel sighed and muttered something about having to explain this entirely too often, “If you say I am your friend, that means, should I choose to enforce it, that you *are my friend*. In Hell, a friend is a rare occurrence. Friends cannot betray secrets, and must aid a friend in need so long as it does not jeopardize your life. So, you see, by stating that I was your friend, pithy as it may seem, you put yourself at risk.”

Jonathan nodded, understanding the explanation but not necessarily the ramifications. He supposed that he would become used to the operations and methods of Hell, but it would take time. Instead, he focused upon a problem at hand. He gingerly picked his way along the skull road before him. While truck wheels might be capable of traveling across the skulls with little more than the occasional turbulent ride, the feet of Jonathan Lane were not so lucky. More than once during the angel’s instructional speech, Jonathan had nearly violently twisted an ankle, or trapped one of his patented leather shoes in the empty eye socket of a skull. He looked at the angel, who was calmly walking across the air with no thought to the suffering of the human beside him and finally asked, “Is there an easier way to arrive at our destination?”

“Well, yes,” replied the angel, stopping his calm pace across the air, “but I assumed you would want to become accustomed to your surroundings.”

“How about we go somewhere and look over these contracts and agreements of yours, and then we can deal with my surroundings?” Jonathan asked hopefully, his mind already thinking of reclining in a plush chair and soaking his sore feet.

The angel nodded and said, “May I touch you?”

“I’m sorry?” asked Jonathan, “Oh, sure, if that’s what you need to do to get us out of here.”

Abdiel gave the man a patient smile and rested a hand upon Jonathan’s shoulder. A slight popping noise echoed in Jonathan’s head, similar to a quick pressure change when landing or taking off in a plane. He shook his head slightly and worked his jaw.

All around him, the opulence of his new surroundings was reflected in his shining eyes. Liling music seemed to echo from nowhere, and the thick red carpet beneath his feet seemed to invite him to lay down right there and take a nap. A front desk, brass with marble top, waited to his left, a human-looking figure waiting patiently behind it to help any in need of assistance. The ceiling overhead was a vaulted affair, made of oak and carved into countless specimens of human beauty. Abdiel stood next to Jonathan, appearing in a charcoal gray suit, his wings conspicuously gone. The shining blue eyes of the angel stared at Jonathan calmly. The executive noted that the angel’s feet still hovered some good few inches from the top of the plush carpeting.

Abdiel gestured to a pair of inviting seats around a short marble table. Jonathan noted that Abdiel now held a briefcase, and tried in vain to recollect whether the angel had held the object just a moment ago. The angel walked toward the table and seated himself in the air beside one of the seats, Jonathan, shaking his head in wonder, took the seat next to the angel, who was opening the briefcase on the table, taking care not to actually touch the tabletop. The executive, noticing the care and caution, wondered whether the table was inherently dangerous, or if Abdiel had a dislike of Formica.

From within the depths of the briefcase, Abdiel pulled two large booklets, one entitled, “Nondisclosure,” and the other titled, “Binding Contracts and Laws.” Abdiel smiled and gestured toward the two pamphlets and said, “You should become familiar

with the contents of these two documents. Sign them when you are satisfied, I will answer any questions or concerns as to content.”

Jonathan nodded and took the two pamphlets. He opened the nondisclosure agreement first, which held three blank sheets beneath the cover; the fourth page had a simple statement typed upon it: “I, the undersigned, hereby agree to speak of nothing to other humans of what I witness within Hell without the express consent of Abdiel, The Morninglord, or Belisarius, under penalty of irrevocable damnation. All reports to and from Celestial Resorts, Incorporated must be approved and censored as those of the Seventh Tier feel appropriate.” There was a small line at the bottom to be signed.

Abdiel nodded to Jonathan, “It is rather straightforward and simple. Be cautioned, however, the agreement is binding. Once you sign, you will not be capable of speaking to outsiders of what is witnessed within Hell’s confines without the punishment being exacted after uttering the first statement. It is a rather harsh punishment, I think, but then, I am not the one who drafted it. I suggest you read the other document before signing the nondisclosure agreement.”

Jonathan nodded slightly and opened the second pamphlet. This document was a brief discussion about the laws and regulations of the lands of Hell¹. Jonathan read the packet twice, attempting to commit the names contained within to memory. After satisfying himself that he had accomplished this task, he smiled at Abdiel, who was watching him with distracted interest, and said, “I feel that I have adequate understanding of the rules.”

Abdiel seemed to snap back to reality, and nodded benignly, gesturing toward the nondisclosure agreement, “Then you have no questions...” He let the sentence trail away, as if expecting that Jonathan could not possibly have any complaint.

“Actually, Abdiel, I do have a few considerations that I wish added to the document,” said Jonathan as he opened the agreement to the only page with ink upon it. He scanned the words once more, firmly anchoring them within his mind, then pointed to the statement regarding censorship, “I wish final approval regarding any censoring that is released concerning documents penned by my own hand.”

Abdiel nodded, “This is agreeable, and wise if I may say so, Jonathan.” A pen seemed to materialize in the angel’s hand as he bent over the paper, scribbling a statement granting Jonathan powers to that effect. Below the line for Jonathan’s name to be signed in agreement, Abdiel drew a second line.

“Anything else?” asked Abdiel, his pen hovering over the second line.

“Yes. I regret to say this, Abdiel, but I cannot be expected to properly represent Celestial Resorts without knowing what is truly happening earth-side. Therefore, I require that incoming messages not be censored. I will sign an agreement stating that I may not reveal what is contained within these documents without the approval of the Seventh Tier, but I will not accept that the words of my corporation may be changed and edited by a third party.” Jonathan took a deep breath and held it, waiting for Abdiel to respond. The angel himself seemed to be considering the matter, but a fierce glint had appeared within the piercingly blue eyes of the litigator. A sudden smile blossomed upon the angel’s face, looking hungry and feral, “Would you accept me as the party governing what you may and may not speak of, Jonathan Lane? Consider carefully. This could be the most important agreement you reach in Hell.”

¹ The contents of this pamphlet are later described under the heading “Laws of Hell”.

Jonathan cocked his head in confusion, staring at the angel, who seemed eager for the agreement. Jonathan thought about what he knew. Abdiel himself was the only being that Jonathan was aware of within Hell, but that was a large difference from a trusted ally. Finally, reaching a decision, Jonathan smiled and said, "I will agree as long as the following stipulations are agreed to: first, I require a guide. Dante had Virgil, and I will not accept the need to travel blindly within Hell itself. This guide must be given the rights of a Citizen of the Third Tier while advising me, and may only be taken from my side with written permission by the Seventh, Eighth, or Ninth Tier." Jonathan paused here to make certain that Abdiel agreed to the first requirement. The angel prompted him to continue, seemingly amused at the notion of a guide. Taking a deep breath, Jonathan continued, "Second, I require your bond-word upon friendship with myself. I must know that while you may play your machinations against Hell, you will not sacrifice me to do so."

Abdiel smiled openly at the bargain. The angel began to write upon the page, stating Jonathan's first demand, then stopped and looked at Jonathan, "I give you, Jonathan Lane, my bond-word. I am now, and forevermore will be, your friend. Thus is my word fulfilled."

Jonathan smiled and said, "I give you, Abdiel, my bond-word. I am now, and forevermore will be, your friend. Thus is my word fulfilled."

The angel's smile turned into a melodious laugh. The demon behind the desk of the establishment stared at the angel in shock and horror. The angel waved at the demon negligently, "*Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.*"

The demon stiffened in rage, and seemed to freeze in place. Jonathan stared at the demon, Abdiel smiled at the creature and said to the human liaison, "Second Tier demon, subordinate to yourself should you command it to perform a task. It has projected its consciousness somewhere else."

Seeing Jonathan's confusion, the angel smiled and produced a third packet from within the depths of the briefcase that rested at the angel's side, hovering in midair next to the angel to leap at his slightest whim. The angel handed the packet to Jonathan, "This is something you should be aware of. Be cautious, however, Jonathan Lane, what you read is not knowledge that many Visitors are aware of. Sinclair Graves seemed not to heed my warnings; you should. You know now that I have your best interests at heart. We are friends."

The last word was said with a tinge of wonder. Jonathan found himself pondering whether or not the angel had ever had a friend. He felt it unlikely. He sighed as he opened the packet to the first page², perhaps this would not be so bad after all. After reading the packet, however, Jonathan's heart seemed to sink into his bowels. He looked at Abdiel who was calmly watching the frozen demon, seemingly considering removal of the frozen form.

"What Tier are you, Abdiel?" asked Jonathan, licking his lips nervously as he watched the demon.

"Seventh," replied the angel, not looking over his shoulder. The angel sighed at the still form of the demon behind the desk and looked back at the human before him, "You have the powers of the first three Tiers, but you must learn to use them. This will

² The contents of this packet are later described under the heading "Measurements and Powers of Hell".

take time, and therefore we should Travel to the Great Garden, where time seems to last forever.”

Jonathan looked at the angel, wondering whether this was a joke. Looking at Abdiel, however, he altered his quandary to whether the angel was *capable* of joking. The angel looked down at the table, containing the unsigned nondisclosure agreement. He signed his name under the approval line, then handed the pen to Jonathan.

“You must sign before we leave,” the angel explained. Jonathan looked at the document and seemed to consider it a moment.

“How long is my shift here?” asked Jonathan, staring at the angel.

“We reevaluate your performance at the end of every year. After that period, you may choose to continue or leave, and we may choose to ask you to continue, or terminate your residency,” explained the angel.

Jonathan nodded slightly, signing his name to the bottom of the page. How long would the year last, he thought, as he absently nodded to Abdiel’s request to touch the human. The world dissolved around him. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the demon unfreeze and a pair of jackal-headed soldiers carrying jagged spears appear next to his vanishing body. Then he was in the Great Garden.

The soldiers, the papers, the very scenery of Jonathan’s vision seemed to blur into a swirling chaos before separating itself once more into ordered items and colors. The world that was painted before Jonathan’s eyes, however, bore no resemblance to the place he had just left.

The Great Garden was, as the name suggested, a sprawling and endless jungle of plant-life. Abdiel hovered in his customary manner just above a row of ferns that slowly blended into the beginnings of a hedge maze that seemed to dominate the horizon. Looking behind himself, Jonathan noted a small cluster of gardeners hacking at the row of ferns in the distance with farming implements. Around the gardeners was a trio of what Jonathan assumed were demons.

The trio all had crimson skin and bat-like wings. Upon consideration, Jonathan decided that the creatures resembled the general theory of demons as described by writers and scholars for ages. With a small shrug, Jonathan turned to regard Abdiel, who seemed to be regarding the fern floating just beneath his feet with slight contempt. Jonathan watched as the plant uncoiled its leafy branches to grasp futilely at Abdiel, who hovered just beyond the plant’s reach.

In shock, Jonathan checked the plants around his own feet, which, unfortunately, did not bear the luxury of levitation. The plants, however, seemed unconcerned or uninterested in his wing-tipped shoes, bending themselves instead toward the hovering Abdiel. The angel waved away Jonathan’s concern with a delicate hand.

“Fear not, my friend,” Abdiel walked across the air as if it were solid ground, gesturing to the ferns, “These are attracted to my . . . let us call it otherworldliness.”

Jonathan nodded wordlessly, staring at the grasping plants.

“Hell is not exactly inviting to my kind.”

A barking noise from behind him startled Jonathan from his contemplation. He looked over his shoulder at the trio of demons, one of whom was loping toward him and Abdiel on cloven feet. The liaison attempted to hide his fear at the appearance of the demon, who towered over the human by a few feet. The horns of the demon recurved

along its head to extend from either side of its jaw. The demon brought himself to a halt before Jonathan and snorted contemptuously, sending a fleck of spittle dribbling down the man's suit, who regarded the frothing saliva with distaste. As the demon leaned in close to the human, Abdiel raised a single hand with a nonchalance that could only be interpreted as an insult.

"Back, servitor, or do you wish me to alert Lilith to your disrespect toward our new liaison?" the words seemed laced with a vague threat, and the demon stiffened in rage, glaring at Abdiel with a bloodlust that was a palpable tension to the air.

"Very well, slave, your new toy is yours," spoke the demon before regarding Jonathan once more, "Don't wander too far, liaison, some of the plants in this garden have shown a taste for fools."

The demon turned back toward its cluster of charges, which were toiling away at the plants, ignoring the demon's disappearance. The pair of demons left watching the gardeners seemed more interested in the actions of their compatriot than the gardeners, however, and seemed extremely curious to learn what revelations the third demon might have learned during its conversation with Abdiel and the strange human. As their compatriot returned to the group, they all stared at the angel and human with contempt, before finally using their pitchforks to prod the gardeners along, taking their small group to another part of the garden.

"Now then," came the voice of Abdiel, drawing Jonathan's attention back to the angel, "let us begin your first lesson."

"Abdiel, where is the guide I requested?" asked Jonathan, waving his arms slightly to steal away the angel's attention from whatever arcane tutorial he was about to launch into. As the angel paused, Jonathan stopped the arm-waving, feeling slightly foolish, but wanting to make certain that he had all of the chips in his corner before delving further into this bizarre culture.

"Ah, well," said Abdiel, appearing slightly abashed, "I was hoping you might want to learn a bit about your own capabilities before meeting your guide. The person I have in mind is something of a special case here in Hell, and I thought it might serve you best to have all of the knowledge about your position that you could possibly attain before I throw the two of you together."

"Special case?" repeated Jonathan, lacing the phrase with as much curiosity that he dared.

"Well, you see, Michael, that is your guide's name, is a special case because he is what we refer to as a 'sorcerer'," Abdiel shielding himself slightly with his wings, as if anticipating some manner of attack from Jonathan at this revelation.

"Sorcerer?"

Seeing that an eruption was not forthcoming, Abdiel smiled slightly and replied, "Well, I felt that a sorcerer's background in dealing with demons might serve you well in this setting. Seeing as Michael is what we call 'frictionally corporeal,' I thought he would be a perfect choice."

"Wait," Jonathan held up a hand, attempting to assimilate all of this information he was receiving, "Begin with defining 'sorcerer,' finish with explaining 'frictionally corporeal.'"

"Ah," replied Abdiel, imparting the wisdom of ages that had been meticulously catalogued in his angelic mind with that single syllable. Jonathan heard the implied

beginning to a lecture, wondered briefly at the choice of the syllable, feeling that “ohm” was the more commonly accepted murmur of enlightenment, and settled himself for a lengthy lesson as to the darker corners of human society.

“Well, you see, Jonathan,” began Abdiel, transitioning smoothly from Zen master to patient grandfather, “Sorcerers are human who make pacts with devils and demons in exchange for what we will call magic. Yes, before you complain to me, I mean lightning-from-the-fingertips, broomstick-riding magic. There are many different types of exhibited powers, and I won’t bore you with details, but in the end, it all boils down to power. Sorcerers receive power in trade for their souls, or portions of their souls.”

Abdiel paused in his rambling, pacing back and forth across the air, causing bloodthirsty weeds and plants to writhe in time with the steps. Seeing Jonathan waiting for the rest of the lesson, Abdiel continued.

“Inevitably, the human forfeits his soul to the demon. When this happens, the soul comes to Hell, and the demon inhabits the body,” a slight pause once more while Abdiel waved a finger toward Jonathan, “you know the ‘he was such a nice, quiet man; how could he do this’ stories? Well, bingo, usually a sorcerer who is now having a relaxing forced retirement in Hell. The demon goes ballistic in the body, and you see the rest of the story. Now, this is not to say that all demons do this mass-murder possession, but many do. However, what I refer to as ‘frictionally corporeal’ is my own private way to describe the poor soul lost in Hell during this time. Should the soul escape, then the soul goes back to the body, the demon comes back to Hell, and everything is put back into place.”

Jonathan was still trying to wrap his mind around the magic concept, but found the theory of frictional corporeality rather simple. He cocked his head slightly, digesting the information, then finally responded, “So you’ve saddled me with a demon-worshipper as my guide?”

“No, not exactly,” spoke Abdiel, “He deals with demons the same way you deal with your managers. Worship is a strong term. Let us say instead that Michael made some poor life choices.”

“But he can escape and put things right?” asked Jonathan.

“With my master, yes,” replied the angel, “With the temporal law enforcement on earth, that depends upon what the demon has been doing in Michael’s absence.”

“Fine, I get it,” replied Jonathan, steeling himself slightly, “When do I meet him?”

“Well,” replied Abdiel, “There is one other important note to keep in mind. Most damned souls have no rights. Sorcerers, by virtue of their extreme knowledge, do have some rights. It’s a free will situation really, a deal between my master and the Morninglord. To make a long story short, sorcerers tend to be First Tier, and are usually acting as overseers and taskmasters for a group of damned souls.”

“I get it,” replied Jonathan, “So this guy can make deals just like a normal demon.”

“Exactly.”

Michael was not much to look at. He seemed human as far as Jonathan could see, but there was an underlying current of self-importance that forced wariness into Jonathan. The man was dressed in rags that could once have been a rather becoming suit.

However, time in the fumes of Hell combined with the likely level of manual labor expected of the wearer, had obviously tested the material far beyond its approved limits. Now it hung on Michael as a shroud, rather than an ornamentation of style.

Michael held his hand out to Jonathan, who stared at the hand with skepticism, “Let’s just say we’ve met and leave the handshakes for later.”

Michael shrugged.

The land in which they found Michael was barren, an endless desert pockmarked with some form of volcanic rock. Each rock was teeming with people, all wielding pickaxes with reckless abandon. The chorus of metal striking stone set Jonathan’s teeth on edge, but Abdiel seemed unconcerned, so Jonathan did his best to remain poised and confident.

Michael had been laboring on one such rock, swinging away not with a pickax, but with a whip. Jonathan had watched for awhile before approaching the man, trying to discern the patterns and reasons for the lashings, which seemed to fall with no provocation. Abdiel had calmly remained silent, though Jonathan could have sworn that the angel’s lip was curled slightly in distaste.

“Why are you moving the rocks?” Jonathan tried to refrain from asking, but his curiosity was nagging him to a degree that quickly built to an undeniable need-to-know.

Michael shrugged, gesturing to a cluster of demons, all of whom seemed to be playing some sort of dicing game, ignoring the labor and the presence of Jonathan and the angel. Every once in awhile, a cheer rose from the table, and one of the demons would stand from the makeshift game to pull one of the laborers from the rock, sending him walking into the endless expanse to some unknown destination.

“They leave the orders, we get it done,” he responded, coiling and uncoiling the whip in a gesture of nervousness that Jonathan recognized immediately, “From what I’ve put together, Chokmah wants a palace, but has little material to work with. We take the rocks apart, and every once in awhile, a transport comes to pick-up the pieces.”

Jonathan nodded, watching the labor a bit more. He knew all of the questions he wanted to ask, and he had a vague understanding of how the hierarchy in Hell tipped the scales to his side in a bargain with this man, but he was still slightly uncertain.

“I have a deal to make with you,” Jonathan figured this was a safe place to start.

Michael perked up immediately, Jonathan could see that he now had the man’s full attention.

“You will teach me what you know about Hell, and I will help you find a way to escape.”

There, he had said it. Simple, workable, a pleasant exchange of services. Abdiel seemed alarmed, but had kept his mouth shut. With a slight shrug, the angel tread across the air a bit closer to the laborers, muttering, “I think I’ll check on the unfortunate souls over here.”

Michael, watching the angel leave, regarded Jonathan with skepticism, “Who are you?”

“My name is Jonathan Lane, and I work for Celestial Resorts.” Jonathan refrained from mentioning the “inc.” part of the title, “I am the new liaison to Hell, and I am hoping you will be my Virgil.”

Michael laughed slightly, Jonathan could see that humor came infrequently to this land. The laughter drifted across the land, causing a pair of the demons to regard Jonathan and Michael with disdain.

"I'll bond-word to this," Michael said, chuckling slightly, "Get me home and you have a friend for all eternity. Thus is my word fulfilled."

"Agreed. The word is bond."

The smile remained on the ace of Michael as Abdiel circled his arms about the trio, his voice nearly a whisper; "May I touch you?"

The pair nodded, and the landscape dissolved around them. The vision of the two humans blurred, the air resolving once more, the horizon marked by glittering lights. Set before the trio, an unnatural line seemed drawn across the sand that lay before their feet. The ground opposite the sand was covered in a dead brown grass that stretched outward, finally reaching a city glimmering in the distance.

"Where are we?" asked Jonathan.

"We stand at the edge of Pandemonium, but still within the realm of Chokmah," replied Abdiel, waving negligently toward the city.

"Things work a bit differently in Pandemonium, Jonathan," continued Michael, "The laws of Pandemonium are unique."

"Well, tell me on our way to the city," sighed Jonathan, beginning to step across the threshold between the two provinces. Abdiel flicked his head slightly, arresting the movement of the human, who seemed to freeze in midstep, hovering on one foot.

"There are traits and facts that are revealed by entering Pandemonium that are . . . delicate," interrupted Abdiel, "I only wish you to be prepared."

Michael gazed skeptically at Abdiel; "He knows what I am."

Abdiel nodded, perhaps a bit mournfully, then flicked his head again, releasing Jonathan, who stumbled forward into Pandemonium. Catching himself with his hands, it was impossible for any of the trio to miss the white band that seemed tattooed on Jonathan's left wrist. Abdiel nodded behind the crouching human, Michael seemingly impressed by the sight.

Both angel and damned stepped forward to help Jonathan to his feet once more. Abdiel wore a white brand identical to Jonathan, Michael's however, was a black band. Jonathan allowed himself to be pulled upright, moving to rub at his wrist in wonder. As he did so, however, he stared in shock. This time, however, Michael mirrored the stare, and Abdiel only looked to the horizon silently.

On Jonathan's right palm was the mark of an ornate "S."

"Michael, why don't you explain what that mark means?" replied Abdiel, refusing to make eye contact with either human, his eyes staring into a distance that no human eye could hope to witness.

Hellbound

“Hell is paved with Good Samaritans.”

-William M. Holden

Warning and Disclaimer: First and foremost, use of this supplement requires access to, and knowledge of, the complete version of Sorcerer, by Ron Edwards. Next, I am obligated to tell you that everything within this supplement is a creation of fiction and so on . . . whatever. I want the reader to be aware that this is fiction, but if you utilize the rituals and sorcery in this book to contact a demon, I refuse to be held accountable for any spiritual or physical condemnation resulting from such action. In short, if Satan comes knocking on your bedroom door late at night, don't come crying to me. Caveat emptor and all that.

Now, let us begin with a brief restatement of old themes and rules, as well as a brief introduction of what is found herein. This supplement mainly deals with a specific method of dealing with demons. The demons described within are the creatures of Judeo-Christian myth that everyone has long since become familiar with throughout the course of their lives. If the last statement does not apply to you, this supplement will likely not apply to you either.

To begin, all rules and mechanics within *Sorcerer* apply here, with minor exception. The process of Binding demons and the Needs and Desires of those demons are treated differently. The Binding process is styled in the classic “sign the dotted line” method of contract negotiation. GMs using these rules should be prepared to focus strongly upon the motivations and agendas of demons when acting as the agent of Hell during such contract negotiations.



“O, for that warning voice, which he who saw
Th’ *Apocalypse*, heard cry in Heav’n aloud,
Then when the Dragon, put to second rout,
Came furious down to be reveng’d on men,
Woe to the inhabitants on Earth!”

-John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Binding

Binding a demon first assumes that the sorcerer in question has contacted and summoned a demon according to the rules presented within Sorcerer. Demons see all such contracts as a chance to gain a soul for the Morninglord, the preferred title of Satan.

Binding a demon requires the drafting of a contract. The parchment and pen are both provided by the demon, who brings such equipment with it wherever it goes. During the process of negotiation, the following conditions are established: fulfilling the Needs of the demon, benefits of fulfilling Desires, usage of powers on behalf of the sorcerer, and the status of “user” for any powers requiring such designations.

A demon will always demand that its Need be fulfilled once per week. This part of the contract is nonnegotiable, as is the default penalty for failing to consider this clause. The penalty to the sorcerer is always 1 Humanity, as long as the sorcerer has at least 1 Humanity to spare. This means that no demon will take the last point of Humanity that a sorcerer has. The last vestiges of the soul must be given willingly, not taken as payment. The payment of this point of Humanity does not negate the loss of Power to the demon as is normal, and the demon who does not have its Needs fulfilled will still be Banished when losing all of its Power.

The powers and user status of these powers of a demon are set at the time of bartering. Demons, as a rule, do not have a set of firm powers. Instead, the contract sets the powers that a demon can access during the time of negotiation. For this reason, a bound demon may have powers much lower than its Power trait, which would signify that a sorcerer did not wish to sign an agreement for a large amount of access, which would imply a large degree of Needs.

A sorcerer may utilize three powers of the demon for every Need that the demon is allowed to choose. Once these are chosen, they are set in stone, and may never be changed without renegotiating the contract, which requires freeing the demon from service and Binding the demon anew. As a rule, Needs are inconvenient for the sorcerer (such as a day of rest once every week when the sorcerer may not call upon the demon’s powers, and must pay one Humanity if the sorcerer chooses to take such an action), but not tax the sorcerer to the limits of his or her ability (such as ten thousand dollars every month when the character only has an income of five thousand dollars every month).

A sorcerer may use a total number of powers every week totaling his or her Lore x5. A sorcerer may always access three additional powers by expending 1 Humanity point. This does place a ceiling upon the use of powers by a sorcerer, making most sorcerers very careful about when and why they utilize their powers.

The role of Desires within a contract are little bonuses for the demon. When a demon is unbound to a sorcerer, that demon has innate Desires and Needs (as normal). A demon without a master in *Hellbound* may continue to exist on earth, but it must fulfill these Needs. Usually, these Needs translate into Desires when the demon is bound to a

human. Obviously, these Desires are negotiable, as the demon no longer *has* to accomplish these Desires, they just seem to stick with them. However, Desires also add one final twist. After meeting a demon's Desire, the sorcerer gains a bonus die on any roll involving interaction with the demon for the next eight hours.

When the deal is final made with the demon, and the contract is signed, the demon is bound as normal by making the Binding roll. As always, Demons love a weak Bind, and they love a stupid sorcerer even more. One final caveat that every contract has is that the demon may leave the sorcerer's service if its Needs are unmet three for consecutive weeks, and that the contract may be severed at any time by the sorcerer by paying 1 Humanity point.

"With not much left to discuss,
there is no use feeling anonymous;
there is one thing that you can trust:
I will remain autonomous."

-Informatik, *Autonomous*

Humanity, Damage, and Survival

The definition of Humanity is a core philosophy of *Sorcerer*. It is integral to any setting or campaign, and so it is naturally defined here. Humanity represents the hold the sorcerer has over his or her own soul. At zero Humanity, the sorcerer is damned, and his or her body and spirit are claimed by Hell. This is normally the end of the sorcerer . . . forever. This is not so in this setting. At the time of damnation, a demon is given control over the flesh of the sorcerer and, for all intents and purposes, it is the demon's. The soul of the sorcerer goes to Hell. This where the real fun begins. One final notation to Humanity, in this setting, Humanity can never be increased above 10, at that point, the sorcerer is considered unblemished and pure. Very few sorcerers ever see 10 Humanity.

Obviously, sorcerers have reached rock-bottom when they go to Hell. They have zero Humanity, and no body. Within Hell, however, the damned soul becomes a form of the body. Damage, however, works a bit differently. When a person is inflicted with enough damage to incapacitate them (meaning the lasting damage is enough that they cannot move or would be considered dead), they lose 1 Humanity. Yes, it is entirely possible to sink below zero into negative numbers, to a minimum of negative 10. A sorcerer may also lose Humanity in any of the previously described manners found in the *Sorcerer* rulebooks.

Humanity is the core concept of Hell. Should the sorcerer ever gain enough Humanity to escape, the sorcerer can leave Hell. Easier said than done.

Only one Humanity is necessary to leave Hell. There is something about the Cerberus Gate that prevents the condemned from leaving. However, with a positive Humanity score, Cerberus Gate allows passage. Therefore, Cerberus Gate becomes the focal point of being in Hell. It is a method of escape, of salvation.

A person with a zero Humanity always has 1 die to roll for the purposes of Humanity checks. Those with negative numbers have the negative balance given as a penalty to the resisting roll during a Humanity check.

"It may be that we have all lived before and died, and this is Hell."

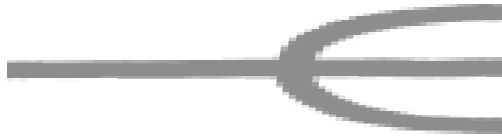
-A. L. Prusick

Humanity-Power Interaction:

However, Humanity can do more than this. Within Hell, whenever a person has a Humanity point to lose, they may trade it for 1 Power point. This grants the sorcerer one demonic power (similar to a demon with 1 Lore, sorcerers use Power rather than Lore to measure number of powers). However, doing so reduces the maximum amount of Humanity that sorcerer may attain. Thus, a sorcerer with 10 Power may never have Humanity, and becomes a full-fledged demon.

A person may also choose to take 1 Power point in any case where they would be reduced to a negative Humanity. A person with zero Humanity who loses one point may, optionally, take one Power point rather than one negative Humanity. While this may seem a handy solution, doing so permanently relinquishes some of the human hold over the sorcerer.

Power has a negative impact on all Humanity gain rolls. Anytime a sorcerer might gain Humanity, Power is added as a penalty to the roll, granting the resistance extra dice. In short, it becomes harder to gain Humanity.



Welcome to Hell

“I want to go to Hell!”

-KMFDM, *Go To Hell*

Hell is divided into nine provinces, similar to the writings of Dante Alighieri. Each of these provinces is ruled by a different master. Within their own province, each ruler is the god and lord of that domain. With this incredible power, however, comes responsibility, and, more importantly, accountability. A lord may never leave his or her province, but maintains the ability to control time, distance, and even the landscape of that province.

Each province also has its own set of bylaws and edicts that must be followed. However, all laws, even the powers and absolute rulership of the lord, are subject to the whim of the Morninglord. For the most part, these laws are trivial, and left to the imagination of the GM, who may institute laws and rules at a whim to make life more difficult for those within Hell.

Laws of Hell:

Hell does have its own version of bureaucracy. Admittedly, this governing system is rather draconian in nature, but it has maintained a balance of power and system of rulership for the past ages.

To define the government of Hell, it becomes necessary to understand the various castes of inhabitants. There are four main types of inhabitants within Hell itself. Each type has certain rights, and its own set of laws that it must adhere to. Of all the four castes, only the Citizens are accounted any amount of variation.

Ci ti zens: The Citizens are numerous, though not quite as large a population as the Condemned. The Citizens is a caste, but within the caste itself, is a class system. This system, known as Tiers, has nine ranks. Each ranks higher than the last, with the Ninth Tier being The Morninglord himself. The Eighth Tier consists of the governors of each region, and the Seventh Tier is known as the Inquisition. The rest of the Tiers are varying degree of plebeian masses, though many hold some minor position.

The Eighth Tier, the circle of governors, has only nine members: Baal, Shaitan, Set, Apep, Lilith, Abaddon, Chokmah, Annis, and Damien. These nine rulers have subdivided Hell into nine territories, with a governor ruling each of these provinces. Within each province, the governors may enact their own laws in addition to the standard laws of Hell, but no law may be made that countermands one of the universal laws of Hell, or that changes the station of any caste. Each governor also holds the ability to promote or demote any Citizen of the Sixth Tier or below. The Seventh Tier exists to enforce the laws of Hell, and act, ostensibly, as the spies for The Morninglord. None may question the Seventh Tier, though the Inquisition has no ability to bring charges against those of the Eighth Tier.

Vi si tors: This is a special caste, made up of those who travel to Hell as liaisons or as guests of Dis. Visitors hold power roughly equivalent to the Third Tier, being able to command those of the first two Tiers of Citizens, as well as controlling the Worker caste

and the Condemned. There are very few Visitors, and this is the only caste that is exempt from the right to seize and condemn by the Inquisition. The Seventh Tier may, however, report any wrong doing to those of the Eighth Tier, or The Morninglord himself, which usually is the equivalent to condemnation.

Workers: Ranking just below the First Tier, the Workers are those demons found guilty of high crimes, but are not given the option of honorable death. The Workers act as slavemasters to the Condemned, but are also put to work next to the damned souls. Workers serve a set amount of time in work camps, designated by their crime, and then are released back into the population of Hell. This caste is impotent in power, but tend to hold grudges against those who mistreat them. Many are wary of the Worker caste, as all Workers are imprisoned within human bodies, but might be of any Tier when released from punishment. A lowly demon tormenting a Worker who is of the Sixth Tier may unknowingly bring about its own doom when the Worker is released from the camps.

Condemned: Not truly inhabitants at all, the Condemned are those souls given to Hell for any number of reasons. These souls are often put to work mining ore, or are routinely tortured by Citizens and Workers alike. No Condemned may ever change caste except through special designations set forth by the Seventh or Eighth Tiers, and they are subject to the commands of all who desire to issue them. Most condemned resembled emaciated humans, but occasionally, a Condemned will be rewarded for hard work by being instilled with more substance by a Worker or Citizen. If this is the case, the Condemned is almost indistinguishable from a Worker.

Binding agreements:

Depending upon caste, there are certain binding abilities within Hell. All rules apply to the lower castes, though many of the higher castes and Tiers are exempt from any number of these rules. The exemptions and binding variations are described below. It is important to note, however, that no binding lasts more than one year and a day. After this duration, all agreements fade into nothingness, with the exception of those penned by The Morninglord himself, which are binding for one century and one year.

Written contract: This is the most binding agreement that can be made. Any who sign an agreement are bound to fulfill its clauses or face whatever default punishment is set forth by the agreement. The contract must be signed with consent of both parties, thus no one may be forced to sign a contract (Though blackmail is not considered forcing the other party). All inhabitants of Hell are bound by written agreements, regardless of rank.

Bond-word: The bond-word is an oath that any may give. After stating that an inhabitant is invoking their bond-word, everything stated after the invocation must be true, and is binding to the inhabitant uttering the oath. The bond-word oath is ended by stating the ritual phrase: "Thus is my word fulfilled." All castes and ranks must adhere to the bond-word.

Blood-oath: The blood-oath is an oath in which one person states an agreement while mingling their own blood with that of the bound party. Blood-oaths are almost always to indenture someone into servitude, but mutual blood-oaths may occur. The bound party does not have to consent to the oath in order to be bound, but their blood

must be drawn at the time the oath is uttered. All castes are subject to the blood-oath, though Citizens of the Sixth Tier and above may not be bound using a blood-oath, though they may bind others using this method.

Binding of Words: Often referred to as Binding, this method is useable only by Citizens, and even then, only upon other castes or those Citizens lower in Tier station. The Fifth and higher Tiers are exempt from the Binding of Words. This binding method forces a person to adhere to a stated phrase. If someone says that they can deliver goods at a cheaper rate than a competitor, a Citizen may hold that person to their words by invoking the Binding. The Citizen merely speaks the phrase: “The word is bond”, and the speaking party must fulfill their statement or be sentenced to damnation, instantly becoming one of the Condemned.

The Seven Laws of Hell:

- 1) Physical contact is allowed only by consent of the touched party. Those touching another must abide by any regulations set forth by the party agreeing to the contact. These stipulations must be stated at the time of acceptance, including a duration for touching. However, those of higher station may always touch those of lower station without consent. Those touched, or if they notice they are about to be touched, may break this law without fear of reprisal.
- 2) No Condemned may speak unless given permission by a higher station.
- 3) All work must cease on the first day of every new year. The Condemned are given a day of rest, as are all Workers. This day is meant only for celebration and feasting of the freedom gained by being cast from Heaven.
- 4) No one not approved by the Sixth Tier or higher may enter the Tunnels. To disobey this law is punishable by damnation.
- 5) No utterance of the Creator or his Son is allowed within Hell. To disobey this law is punishable by damnation.
- 6) All written contracts and blood-oaths may be passed into the control of a third party so long as the agreement is one of servitude. By doing so, however, the term of servitude is lessened by one month.
- 7) To disobey the word of the Seventh Tier is punishable by damnation. Only the Eighth Tier and The Morninglord himself may question the words of the Inquisition.

Measurements and Powers in Hell:

Hell itself has a bizarre level of measurements. Each system is set by the governor of each province, and must be used while within the boundaries of that province. Most of the provinces use the metric system (it seems that demons enjoy order, so long as they control it). Some few governors have other methods, however. For instance, Chokmah uses the standard measuring system of inches and feet; Lilith uses cubits and spans; and Shaitan does not allow distance measurements of any kind within his realm.

While this may seem convoluted, it is truly not. Each province is its own microcosmic entity within the greater whole. While all provinces must adhere to the rules of Hell in general, everything not covered by these laws are subject to the governor’s whim. This also applies to the passage of time.

Time In Hell : While there is no night or day within Hell, time is still kept by using mechanical clocks. These mark hours and days. The amount of hours within one day is determined by each governor, and the length of every year is determined by The Morninglord himself. At present, 797 years have passed within Hell since the beginning of time. It is said that in the year 1000, The Morninglord will be free once more to walk the earth, and the Condemned will be released from their prison.

It is further important to note that while each territory has a different length of day, as determined by the governor, they are all the same from the outside. This is a confusing concept to many Visitors. The closest explanation for this phenomenon is that within each territory, time slows itself or speeds itself according to the whim of the governor of each territory. Thus, in The Wastes, the lands ruled by Chokmah, there are twenty-six hours to each day. Within the Great Garden, the lands of Lilith, there are fifty-two hours in one day. From an outside perspective, these days are both equivalent in measured time. Within the lands of Chokmah, an hour seems to be every bit as long as an hour in the Great Garden. Therefore, a day in the Great Garden seems to last twice as long as a day in the Waste. This is not to say that the hours and days *are* different, on the contrary, to those experiencing an hour of time in either land, the passage will seem the same. From an outside perspective, time seems to merely flow twice as fast within the Great Garden. To The Morninglord, and those within the resort known as Dis, time flows as it does on Earth, though The Morninglord maintains some bizarre ability to stretch moments into eons at will.

By stretching and contracting moments, days can extend into centuries of earth time, making punishments seem inordinately brutal, or surprisingly swift. These changes are held by The Morninglord. When he decides to exercise his will upon time, seconds seem to hesitate, or stop altogether according to mechanical clocks. Falling objects slow or increase, depending on relative time. Living beings, and the Condemned, however, are unaffected by these changes, thus it may often seem that gravity or motion itself is being arrested. The truth, however is that the inhabitant is moving through a slowing of time, but is not feeling the effects of the actions. Currently, Hell is operating at one-half the rate of earth, thus falling objects seem to fall at half the rate of earth, and seconds last twice as long. Thus, a person demoted to Worker status in the Great Garden for one month must abide thirty days of hard labor and torture, with each day lasting fifty-two hours, though each hour seems to last twice as long as it does on earth. To convert this into earth time, the thirty-day month of punishment seems to last one hundred and thirty days of earth time. Naturally, Hell uses an hourly wage scale for payments for all jobs and tasks, including scheduled breaks. This can be rather taxing upon humans.

Current rates for Condemned is \$5.00 per hour. Hell uses U.S. dollars as standard currency, as the portal to Hell is located in the U.S. Condemned are exempt from taxation, though most would say instead that taxes and penalties have already been removed. Many Condemned stockpile money in order to purchase “freedom” from their guards. Most guards are underpaid (standard rate is \$12/hour), and will “look the other way” for a short duration in return for a hefty bribe. Fleeing Condemned invariably run to Dis, where laws and rules are lax concerning Condemned.

Powers: All castes have some few abilities that they may make use of within Hell. These powers may not be superseded by the governor of a province, and work identically

in all provinces regardless of time dilation or contraction and measurement system. As an inhabitant increases in station, so does its array of powers. What follows is by no means a complete array of powers, as each inhabitant also exhibits powers based upon form and function of the demon-type that the demon exists as, but these powers are the recorded types universal to all inhabitants dependent upon level. The Condemned have no access to any of the following powers, however, a demon of a higher Tier may “lend” powers to a Condemned at will. This allows Condemned to rejuvenate themselves after a long day of work, or to hover above dangerous ground to mine ore. However, a demon lending such a power may not make use of such an ability during the time of lending. These abilities operate independently from the usual demonic powers list.

Remember that sorcerers are the equivalent of First Tier demons.

Powers of the First Tier:

Hovering: The inhabitant may hover up to two feet from the ground. While suspended in the air, no movement is possible, but the creature may hold weight normally allowed by strength without change in position.

Rejuvenation: The inhabitant may instill itself with energy equivalent to a normal day’s rest.

Listening: The inhabitant may listen to any conversation not shielded by Insulation. Finding conversations not Insulated are extremely rare, usually only occurring by Visitors not aware of their powers or those not capable of this power.

Powers of the Second Tier:

Projection: The inhabitant may project its consciousness elsewhere. In doing so, the inhabitant’s body becomes frozen, and is vulnerable to outside influence, such as attacks. As the body is not inhabited, it may be touched without permission by the owner. The consciousness travels at speeds nearly twenty times that of a person running at full speed. When arriving at a destination, the consciousness appears as a ghostly image of the original body. It may speak, but not physically interact with another.

Insulation: With this power, the inhabitant may Insulate a conversation from the powers of Listening or Seeing.

Seeing: With this power, the inhabitant may extend its sight to look through the eyes of someone not using Insulation. As a rule, all with the ability of Insulation routinely make use of the shielding ability of it at all times.

Powers of the Third Tier:

Extended Touch: This enables an inhabitant to touch and manipulate objects as if using its own hands, but only by seeing the object. No inhabitant may be touched by this without permission, as normal.

Powers of the Fourth Tier:

Traveling: With this power, the inhabitant may travel across distances within the same province without moving. Anything or anyone touched travels with the inhabitant. The inhabitant may only Travel somewhere that has been witnessed previously.

Powers of the Fifth Tier:

Jumpi ng: The inhabitant may Travel, but is no longer restricted to traveling within the same province of Hell.

Powers of the Sixth Tier:

Hardeni ng: The inhabitant may “harden” a room against Traveling or Jumping. This exists as long as the demon is within the room, and all wishing to transport themselves to the room that is Hardened must first obtain permission of the warding party, usually by using the power of Projection to ask.

Powers of the Seventh Tier:

Truth Seeki ng: With this power, the inhabitant may unerringly tell the difference between truth and fiction. This power is always active.

Mul ti pl i ci ty: The inhabitant using this power may exist in multiple places at once. Only one body may exist in each province, but what happens to one, is experienced by all. This allows the Inquisition to appear to be omnipresent. Those of the Eighth Tier lose this ability, as the governors may no longer leave their provinces for any reason, but become as gods within those realms that they control.

Powers above the Seventh Tier are unrecorded, but it assumed that the abilities increase dramatically in power and scope as the inhabitant approaches the final levels of dominance.



Nine Provinces:

“In a fight between you and the world, bet on the world.”

-Franz Kafka

What follows is a brief description of all nine provinces of Hell. The last given, that of Pandemonium, is the focus of the setting. The other settings are given detail briefly for expansion by GM's should they feel that other focuses for their own version of Hell should exist. Pandemonium, however, is the heart of Hell in the setting of *Hellbound*. It is also the main point of entry and exit for others, as well as condemned sorcerers, so by consequence, most sorcerers will eventually find their way into this land, despite their starting point within Hell.

In keeping with the “Measurements and Powers of Hell”, described above, all provinces are given a measurement scheme and time for each day. Keep in mind that these measures are only relevant for those within that province, as are the measurements. The drastic change between certain environments and provinces can be extreme, and GM's wishing to explore other provinces should make certain that the adjustment period for the sorcerer's internal clock be taken into account when acclimating oneself to new surroundings.

The Wastes:

Ruler: Chokmah

Measurement scheme: English

Hours/Day: 26

The Wastes are a barren landscape, roughly the size of China. There is a small village near the southern edge, along the border of Pandemonium. The land is a vast desert, pockmarked with small rock of an igneous nature.

Chokmah rules the land with a lax grip, only controlling those within the village, and ignoring the rest of the lands. All damned souls are required to spend six days in seven mining the rocks from the desert. On the seventh day, transports arrive to haul away the mined rock, giving the damned a chance to rest.

Each mining troop is made-up of eight damned souls, one First Tier overseer, and three Second Tier guards. Of all the lands, the mining groups of the Wastes have the most “disappearances” of anywhere within Hell.

The reason for the disappearances are mostly due to the fact that Damien, Ruler of Pandemonium, has started sending small groups of “recruiters” across the borderlands to collect mining groups. These groups tend to have an eighty percent success rate, only losing about half of the damned during struggles.

Chokmah seems aware of the recruitment groups, but is reluctant to allow his police force of nearly six thousand demons to leave his village, where his gargantuan palace seems eternally under construction. The reason for this is because Chokmah would rather lose the miners, than the servants he has in his palace.

The palace itself is a gargantuan structure, consisting of over two thousand rooms. Chokmah claims that the palace is “almost finished”, though he has said this for the last three hundred years. Most believe the unsatisfactory outlook is due to the fact that the palace is situated on a plateau that overlooks Pandemonium, where Chokmah is constantly staring out over the sprawling city. Seeing the teeming masses and desiring

the same, Chokmah constantly revises his plans, demanding entire sections to be reconstructed and recreated.

The Great Garden:

Ruler: Lilith

Measurement: Archaic English (cubits, spans)

Hours/Day: 52

The Great Garden is a vast jungle, constantly changing and ever-expanding. The jungle is forever being tended by the damned souls, who are overseen by a trio of guard of the Third Tier. Most believe that the Garden grows at the behest of Lilith, who seems to delight in the chaos of the growth. However, publicly, she seems to abhor the untamed land, constantly replanting the land into orderly rows and columns.

Of all the lands, however, the Great Garden is the least sheltering to sorcerers. The very land itself is a teeming mass of demons and imps. Every plant, every guard, all of it is a demon. Due to this, Lilith takes a dim view of anyone who is able to permanently subjugate the land and its inhabitants.

There are no cities or villages within the Great Garden, only ramshackle tents and camps that are constantly moving. Damned are given half of each day to stop tending the Garden and set-up or break-down camp. This process usually takes a few hours, with the rest of the night being devoted to food preparation and sleep.

The most culture that exists in the Garden is given through the plants themselves, some of whom can speak, and the rare instances when groups of gardeners run into each other. For this reason, most sorcerers who find themselves within the Great Garden do everything in their power to make any stay within this province as short as possible.

The Deep:

Ruler: Shaitan

Measurement: none (it is the void)

Hours/Day: 10

Nothing is truly known about the Deep. It is said that somewhere in the void that Shaitan rules a vast city of lost thoughts and dreams. The truth is unknown. None are allowed to enter or leave the Deep. Most believe that the Deep is a gateway to the dwelling of the Morninglord, who resides in the pit where he fell when cast from the heavens.

Hades:

Ruler: Abaddon

Measurement: English

Hours/Day: 24

Hades is the land of fire and brimstone. Volcanic mountains and jagged rocks are the run of the land. Multiple villages dot the landscape, set next to the endlessly twisting rivers of molten rock. The villages are routinely abandoned and inhabited at times around the year, the migration constantly keeping ahead of the ash storms that sweep through the countryside. The rivers of the land drop to a subterranean aspect at the northern edge of the land, flowing underneath the Wastes, which is the reason that the desert province is devoid of life. It is also the reason that the rocks that pepper the Wastes exist.

Hades has always been at odds with the Wastes since the beginning of time. Abaddon, who would love nothing more than to annex the Wastes to escape the ash storms that plague his land, has a long-standing pact with Annis, Lady of the Factory. Abaddon delivers the heat and iron deposits to the Factory, in return for Annis creating a venting system that would clear most of the ash. Annis claims that she is hard at work on the venting system, but this has been in the works for nearly two centuries, with little actual result.

The damned of this land are used primarily as pack mules for the migrations through the villages, and, when not moving, they are miners and heavy laborers. There is little oversight on the part of the demons, mainly due to the fact that it would require specific research in order to escape the raining ash storms that threaten to choke and bury everyone who lags behind.

The primary claim to fame of this land is that it houses Cerberus Gate. The gate is positioned on the lands of Hades, near the borders of both The Factory and Pandemonium. Abaddon has done his best to ensure that the gate is seen as his to govern, though it is widely known that Damien is the true ruler of the massive doorway to earth.

Underworld:

Ruler: Apep

Measurement: Archaic English

Hours/Day: 20

Apep has constructed a land of bygone days. The entire land is structured after the Greek and Roman Underworld. Gods play vicious games with the lives of the inhabitants, and demons are little more than messengers for powerful beings. While there are any number of sources and study into this subject, little concrete is known. Apep is a jealous Ruler, and has the least to do with others in terms of outside influence.

Most feel that Apep is playing-out some long forgotten war or battle inside his own twisted mind, but few can be certain. All who enter the Underworld are required to abide by the rules of the province, which always begins with a drink at the waters of the Lethe. Due to this, spies and informants are notoriously unreliable and lost when entering this land.

A few sorcerers claim to have escaped this land, clawing through their own subconscious to recover lost memories and lives. In the eyes of most, however, the claims of these sorcerers are unreliable, as their stories always seem to conflict and be full of inconsistencies.

Dark Forest

Ruler: Baal

Measurement: Archaic English

Hours/Day: 36

It is thought that this is the land that Dante entered upon his trek to Hell. The land is a shadowed wood, whose ruler is a demon known as Baal. Baal is a hunter, constantly traveling the forest with his hunting party. The group seems to track strangers and damned with relative ease, hunting them for sport and pleasure.

Due to the violent nature of the ruler, Damien was forced to rescind his offer to allow logging operations to take place in the Dark Forest, as the first three expeditions

sent to this land were butchered. Celestial Resorts was paid a missionary fee for the damages to property and people, a fact that the company is loath to let Damien forget. Because Damien was bettered by the corporation on this note, he and Baal have been strained in their relationship.

Very few find anything of use within these lands, save for those few demons in search of the most dangerous game. It is recommended that this province be avoided by the unprepared.

Thebes

Ruler: Set

Measurement: Metric

Hours/Day: 24

The Hell of ancient Egypt thrives in the lands of Set. This demon is a god to his people, and demands absolute worship from his subjects. These lands are popular with prospective tourists, which has caused Damien to enter negotiations with Set to open the lands for tourism, though Set seems skeptical as to the net benefit to himself and his land. The discussion continues, however, and most feel that Set will eventually give in to the Ruler of Pandemonium, though at a price none feel comfortable speculating upon.

The land itself is mostly a gigantic temple district, though with enough grassy lands and lush vegetation to make the land seem hospitable to most. The river that winds through the land is reminiscent of the Nile, though Set claims it is known as the Styx. No one is certain why Set has claimed this name, but most feel it is a bone of contention between himself and Apep, as it is widely known the two rulers are not on the best of terms.

The Factory

Ruler: Annis

Measurement: English

Hour/Day: 36

The Factory is the area where all natural resources are processed and used for production. Annis, Queen of the Cog, as she is called by her detractors, watches over the production with grim efficiency. It is widely known that Damien sells troublesome workers to Annis, who puts these souls to work in her factory, or uses them as food.

All other provinces pay Annis for goods produced in the Factory. Annis is by far the most wealthy and influential of rulers, due to her control over goods. All rulers seem more-or-less on good terms with her, though Abaddon is growing increasingly impatient to receive his ventilation system. To her credit, Annis *has* worked on it, but its production would require much of the facility to be refitted for the project, and Annis knows that this is not only uneconomical, but inefficient as well. Therefore, she has been trying, for the last fifty years, to find a polite way to mention this to Abaddon without jeopardizing her mining contracts.

Pandemonium:

Ruler: Damien

Measurement: Metric

Hours/Day: 24

The de facto capital of Hell, Pandemonium is a sprawling city ruled by a canny and unpredictable master. Damien, Ruler of Pandemonium, is a schismatic demon, less wicked and evil, and more willing to bargain and barter than any other ruler. In fact, due to this, Pandemonium has a unique set of rules and laws that sets it apart from the other eight provinces.

The city itself is approximately thirty kilometers in radius, and is crowded with every type of creature imaginable. Damien has recently allowed the resort tourists of Dis, which is also within his province, to spend one day on the streets of Pandemonium for a substantial fee. Due to this, it is possible to find beings who are not of Hell walking the alleys and shops of this city.

Overall, the city has the feel of Las Vegas, with kitsch pouring from its every conceivable pore. Neon signs, casinos, bars, fetish clubs, all of it is commonplace within Pandemonium. However, along with this ambience of careless abandon is a definite undercurrent of menace. Everyone is on their guard within Pandemonium, and it often feels as if the smiles and grins hide a Machiavellian scheme behind the eyes.

At night, the skyline of the city is aglow with lights, and the skyscrapers and buildings loom high overhead. The entire city has a high-tech feel, but with enough dark grime and dirt to seem very “film noir” in appearance. In addition, styles of dress and speech seems more characteristic of the 1920’s or 1930’s, rather than present day.

Due to certain concessions gained by Abdiel and Jonathan Lane, there has been a new power bloc within Pandemonium, causing many to have rights and strictures similar



to a unionized industry. However, though a new regime is rising, it is still business as usual for the mainstay of the inhabitants.

To facilitate the need for space and order, Damien has divided Pandemonium into five districts. Each district is ruled by a Consular (who is of the Official standing), and that Consular has final authority for all people and actions within his or her district, with the exception of dictates by the Mayor or Damien himself.

The Banking District:

Consular: Heidrich Pluvian, Demon of the Fifth Tier

Population: 210,000 (estimated)

Revenues: \$3.1 billion, last month

The Banking District is one of the smallest districts in size, but possibly the largest by influential scale. Positioned in the heart of the City, the Banking District has recently opened its first earth-based bank branch; First Bank of America. The district has the only commodities exchange within Hell, the Morgan Street Exchange, which trades only in futures and commodities from other provinces in Hell. Heidrich has ruled this district since the founding of the City, and is widely known to be a close acquaintance of Damien himself. Though Heidrich is modest in Power, he is possibly the most influential demon within Pandemonium, ruling a bustling district rife with internal corruption and bribery.

Rent and taxation within the Banking District is astronomical, ensuring that only a privileged few have access to the wealth and splendor provided by it Consular. All buildings are made of a marble facing, though a number have been stained by the fumes and occasional drifts that blow in from Hades far to the east. The most imposing structure in the district is, naturally, the abode of Heidrich, who makes home above the exchange, on the penthouse of the Morgan Street Exchange Center, a building that seems to defy all logic and understanding from an architectural standpoint.

Other notable citizens of this district include: George Carvellian, branch manager for the First Bank of America and sorcerer extraordinaire, one the few humans allowed within Hell on a permanent basis; Juniper Vanischek, a loathsome demon known for his double-crossing and political connections; Halifax Thorne, president of the Acquisition, Incorporated company, which is the leading press-gang sponsorship and slave-trade corporation; and Blackheart, a mysterious possessor demon that runs the Alternative Air corporation, the largest manufacturer of illicit substances in Pandemonium. A multitude of other, lesser officials and people exist, though these are by far the most popular currently.

The Warehousing District:

Consular: Leighton Craig, sorcerer

Population: 435,000 (estimated)

Revenues: \$131 million, last month

Directly west of the Banking District, and sprawling over eight kilometers long, the Warehousing district is more commonly referred to as the ghetto or slums. No building over six stories exists, and most buildings are dilapidated structures fit for demolition. The streetlights that gleam so brightly in the Banking District end abruptly

as one crosses 47th Avenue, and the air of well-dressed doublespeak gives way instantly to a feeling of oppressive doom.

The buildings are situated closely together, often leaving alleys barely wide enough for a person to walk through, and the streets seem to have little uniformity in terms of width and pavement. Streets can change from four-lane, well-paved affairs to barely two-lane cobblestone paths in the span of a few meters, and the wider streets are usually occupied by a number of ramshackle tents and cardboard lean-tos that enterprising entrepreneurs rent by the hour for those desiring privacy.

Most of the warehouses are owned by private firms and consortiums, though most have abandoned the property, and would be appalled to find that such assets still remain nominally under their control. Squatters and gangs have taken control of these structures, and use them as bases of operations or convert them to slum-housing. Others still operate as warehouses in a traditional sense, but extortion rings and theft have made the cost of doing business in this area less than profitable.

Leighton Craig, the current Consular of this district, is one of many different minions promoted by Damien to “clean-up” the area. With tourism on the upswing, Damien is growing concerned that the violent and clannish gangs of the area might be a deterrent to visitors. The police force is attempting to establish some sort of control, but the lack of permanent residences and constantly changing populace makes it very difficult to keep a close watch on the occurrences within the Warehousing District. Leighton makes his home in one of the warehouses, named Building 27A, though most avoid the area as much as possible. It is widely suspected that the building itself is a demon, which is a finding that many gangs discover to their dismay about a great number of the warehouses in the district.

The Shopping District:

Consular: Redgrave Musk, demon of the Fifth Tier

Population: 117,000 (estimated)

Revenues: \$1.1 billion, last month

The Shopping District radiates southward from the Banking District, consisting of a long, winding path of shops, bars, and malls for tourists and others to visit. Originally, this district was the slave blocks and red-light district, both of which the area still holds a heavy hand in, though with tourism making its sweep through the City, this area has become the premiere “knick-knack” and curios area of the City. Most tourists spend the balance of their time within the City browsing the storefronts, and purchasing odd little trinkets and baubles to carry home with them. To give some idea of the oddities that are for sale, an enterprising young demon of the Second Tier recently opened a shop specializing in “sea demons”, which appear to be brine in water. The item is one of the most popular purchases for tourists looking for something a bit on the amusing side.

Some of Hell’s most famous designers sell their wares in the Mecca Profanis, a large, five-story shopping mall. There is speculation that many of the designers want to entice more human-looking models to their runways in the near future, and rumor has it that Celestial Resorts has been ferrying headshots of up-and-coming models to these designers for a premium.

Redgrave Musk, the Consular of this district, allows the businesses to run themselves, with little or no interference from her. She realizes that it is everyone’s best

interests to treat tourists as honored guests, but has, on more than one occasion, been heard to remark that she thinks of it as “getting them acclimated to their future surroundings”. Currently, Redgrave, who is a parasite demon of the Sixth Tier, is housed in the body of a young man in his late twenties. However, it is apparent that she is growing bored of the body, as the flesh is rapidly beginning to atrophy from her residency. When not in a host, Redgrave appears as a cloud of buzzing insects, speaking the drone of a thousand voices. Inside a body, her voice is melodically feminine, with a slight southern accent. Redgrave’s claim to fame is that she was the motivating force behind the infamy of Mae West, claiming that before Redgrave met her, “the woman was bound for the nunnery”. Whether this is true or not is unknown, but it has become a story that has sparked the amusement of thousands.

The Gambling District:

Consular: Jimmy Grims, demon of the Fifth Tier

Population: 195,000 (estimated)

Revenues: \$2.6 billion, last month

The Gambling District is the oldest district within the City. Originally, this district was the residential area of Pandemonium, though development quickly overtook the homes, driving the living area to the north. The district is situated to the east of the Banking District, with a southwestern border that is indistinctly drawn between itself and the Shopping District.

This area glitters with neon and mirrors. The main focus of this area is are the four casinos, the Fifth Season, Grim Entertainment, the Palace, and Winner’s Circle. All offer the standard gambling recreational facilities, and have some of the most provocative and entertaining shows of anywhere in the world. A second focus of this area is the fact that it is quickly taking control of the red-light district, which has historically been the province of the Shopping District. Redgrave, Consular of the Shopping District, has her roots in the oldest profession, and therefore is understandably bitter about many of the brothels and bordellos moving from her area to the Gambling District.

Jimmy Grims, however, the Consular for the Gambling District, has relaxed taxation against business-owners, which is drawing many of the more exotic and speculative companies to re-evaluate their positions in other districts. Almost at odds with the kitsch atmosphere of this area, however, is the fact that it is dotted by a multitude of occultic bookstores and libraries. All of these more arcane shops have found the relaxed taxation a boon to them, as their clientele are rare, but loyal, and will not care about location.

Jimmy himself has only recently ascended to his position after the mysterious disappearance of the previous Consular, Murat Kriege, who was widely known to be a public detractor of Grim Entertainment, the casino and business establishment of Jimmy Grims. The investigation is ongoing, though no proof connecting Jimmy to the disappearance has surfaced.

The Residential District:

Consular: Zeitgeist, a demon of the Sixth Tier

Population: 1.2 million

Revenues: \$656 million, last month

A large network of homes, palaces, and apartments, the Residential District is an ever-changing landscape of architecture. The street layout is a web of cul-de-sacs and twisting roads that seem intent of hopelessly confusing any visitor. For this reason, as well as the relatively dark atmosphere after night falls, a few enterprising citizens have started offering tours on buses to visitors.

Zeitgeist, Consular of the district, rules with a rather tight fist. He was once in control of the Warehousing District, but was removed for lack of progress. As a consequence, he was relegated to the Residential District, which all but rules itself. His anger at the demotion in responsibility has driven him slightly mad, making him irrational at best. Most feel it is only a matter of time before he oversteps his bounds and Damien is forced to punish him further.

The district itself, however, has an eclectic collection of structures. Every house is as different from the one next to it as could be imagined, as each demon exercises its own view of perfection through creation. Many are tiny versions of Damien's own palace deep in the country, though others are miniature skyscrapers or ancient castles. One of the most famous homes belongs to Fakir Bendisan, a demon of the Fourth Tier who has become quite rich through the trade of damned souls and iron ore. The home is a perfect replication of the Taj Mahal, and many suspect that Fakir has the original architect of the palace at his disposal to recreate such art so perfectly.



Citizen Standings and Rights within the City:

There are five standings for beings with Pandemonium (often referred to as the City). Each has the rights of at least a First Tier demon according to the Laws of Hell document described previously.

Each denizen of the City is marked with a tattoo on its left wrist (or all of the left wrists in the event of having more than one): black for Worker, green for Citizen, red for Tourist, blue for Lord, and white for Official. None but an Official may represent itself as a Tourist, and a Tourist may not represent itself as anything other than a Tourist. This is a problem for many, as often times one is disrespectful to a lesser being, only to later discover it was a higher station being masquerading as a weak individual. *No matter what station a sorcerer represents itself as, a sorcerer always has a black "S" marked on its right palm.*

Possessor and Parasite types all have their hosts marked with tattoos denoting the possessor's rank, or the parasite's rank. This band is outlined by a second tattoo denoting the station of the host body (if it still contains a mind). When not within a body, or for those demons without "arms", a spot of color is marked prominently on the being in some manner so as to identify the rank.

Each of the standings are described below:

Tourist: The special designation given to those from Dis. Tourists are considered off limits to demons and damned alike. Tourists are to be given cursory respect, and are seen as visiting guests, rather than people to be used in machinations and schemes. While this is the overall designation for Tourists, it should be noted that Pacting (see *Sorcery & Sword*) is allowed and viable with Tourists. Should a Tourist agree to a Pact, it loses its Tourist standing, becoming a Citizen of Hell (albeit a temporary one), and must abide by the rules and strictures set forth to govern Citizens. In terms of rights and command, Tourists have the powers and rights granted to a Second Tier demon. Tourists are marked with a red tattoo.

Worker: The Damned and those guilty of transgressions are those who attain this designation. Workers have few rights, but *must be paid for their services*, even if they are owned by a higher class. The payment scheme is five dollars per hour, one tenth of which is paid back to Damien as a tax. Workers are still considered sentient beings, and therefore killing them is still murder, however, mistreatment such as beatings and torture are considered legal, as long the result does not permanently prevent the Working from accomplishing its appointed task. The law decrees that any Worker who evades capture and ownership for 101 days is freed and given the designation of Citizen (or the previous designation in the event that the being was a more powerful class of being previous to being condemned to Worker status). Workers are still considered sentient beings, and therefore killing them is still murder, however, mistreatment such as beatings and torture are considered legal, as long the result does not permanently prevent the Working from accomplishing its appointed task. Workers are marked with a black tattoo.

Citizen: A Citizen is the largest category of inhabitant within the City. All Citizens are First through Third Tier demons, or a sorcerer. Citizens may conduct themselves with a certain degree of freedom, though they are expected to follow all rules and laws. All Citizens are also required to pay the Citizen Levy put forth by Damien in order to maintain their standing. The Citizen Levy is described below in the laws section. Tourists who become Citizens through Pacting are not required to pay the Citizen Levy due to the fact that they are temporary visitors. Citizens may purchase Workers, and own property, and are generally given free rein within the City. Citizens are marked with a green tattoo.

Lord: Demons of the Fourth through Sixth Tiers are given the designation of Lord. Sorcerers who have bound and kept a demon of this power for 101 days are also given this designation. Lords have few rights above that of a Citizen, though they are exempt from the Citizen Levy. Lords may command Citizens, who are bound to obey, so long as the task is not menial (such as fetching the lord a drink), or deadly (killing oneself). The circumstances mitigating the command of a Lord are intentionally vague, and the police force of the City is notoriously uncaring toward settling disputes of commands between Lords and Citizens. Most often, a Lord who is disobeyed will seek its own vengeance, which is incentive enough for most Citizens to obey. Lords are marked with a blue tattoo.

Official: Demons of the Seventh Tier and government employees are given this designation. All Officials may command anyone who is not an Official to do anything that is not illegal or self-destructive, and they must be obeyed. Damien enforces that commanded beings must be paid for their time, at a scale equivalent to

twenty dollars per hour. The police force is the most prevalent Official status group within the City. Damien makes certain that corruption is kept to a tolerable level within the government, though he finds it too troublesome to keep it completely free of “poor influences”. However, he is notoriously vicious when it comes to someone proving wrong-doing in his government, with results that are usually brutal and final for the offending Official. For this reason, most government employees tend to be fanatical when it comes to following policy, and will rarely deviate from instructions. Officials are marked with a white tattoo.

Laws of the City:

The following are the commonly known rules of the land. Others certainly exist, though they are not necessarily made public to beings until the law is violated. Most people will survive without problems as long as they adhere to laws that would be similar to those on earth.

- Tourists may not be killed or commanded unless they have voluntarily Pacted with a non-Worker of Hell.
- Murder will be repaid in kind.
- There are only two punishments aside from death, and they are Worker status and fine. Should a Worker be found guilty of crime, the Worker will be killed and the owner (if any) will be fined one thousand dollars. Should a crime against another be committed, that person is required to set a fine price between five and fifty thousand dollars. Should the fine not be paid by the offending party (for any reason), then the offender is stripped to Worker status and is now owned by the victim of the crime.
- The Citizen Levy must be paid by every Citizen each week, and is one hundred dollars.
- Sorcery is legal within Hell, though Banishment is equivalent to murder. Binding above your station is against the law, though holding the bound demon for 101 days without capture elevates the sorcerer to a higher status.
- Lying to someone of higher status is against the law. Should a being represent itself as someone of lower station, however, it is not the fault of the liar not to discern such a fact when lying.
- The abilities described in the “Measurements and Powers of Hell” section are not allowed in Pandemonium, they just won’t work.

Dynamics and Other Facts of the City:

There are a number of odd traits of the City. First is that of the press gangs. The press gangs are paid by Citizens and Lords to sweep the City for Workers that have run away or are hiding throughout the City. All press gangs must wear black shirts that have manacles stenciled onto them. This rule has often been observed as what it states, meaning that while the press gangs must wear the shirts, the shirt need not be visible. These press gangs are a routine sight near the evening hours, and often work in groups of four or five. Press gangs and escaped Workers have a difficult dynamic. Many Workers pay good money to the press gangs to leave them alone, and many press gangs are paid well to bring back Workers. The result is a delicate economic balance of bribery that is often upset by the hiring party.

Another trait is the fact that beings may represent themselves as lower station. All beings have a tattoo on their left wrist that designates their station, as is described above in the “Citizen Standings” section of this document.

The City is a great morass of demon and human, living in tandem. What is most apparent to sorcerers finding themselves within Pandemonium is the fact that the tables are turned here. On earth, the sorcerer is generally considered “above” demons. Within Hell, demons have the upper hand. In fact, it is considered quite vogue to have a sorcerer Worker as a bodyservant.

Pandemonium is the mecca of Hell, often seen as Hell itself, and the other provinces merely satellites of the greater whole. Damien encourages this view, with the result that other provinces despise inhabitants of Pandemonium. However, Dis has proven to be a great source of power for Damien, making him not only more powerful, but more influential than other demons. It is through Damien that all other demon must deal with to gain concessions from Celestial Resorts, Incorporated, as Damien was smart enough to add sole proprietorship to his contract with the company for dealing with Hell.

Roles for Workers in the City:

Some examples of common employment of Workers within Pandemonium are as follows:

Prostitutes, serving people, taxi drivers, minor clerks, heavy labor, and food preparation

Roles for Citizens in the City:

Some examples of common employment of Citizens within Pandemonium are as follows:

Managers, pimps, constituency, investigators, researchers, small business owners, land owners

Roles for Lords in the City:

Some examples of common employment of Lords within Pandemonium are as follows:

Managers, drug lords, land owners, corporate officers, moguls, philanthropists, collectors

Roles for Officials in the City:

Some examples of common employment of Officials within Pandemonium are as follows:

Police officers, government employees, political committees, corporate officers, land owners



Notable Inhabitants of Pandemonium:

Arcole, Bound Demon of Leighton Craig, Demon of the First Tier

Appearance: Arcole is an imp. He is roughly twelve centimeters tall, with crimson skin and a pointed tail. Arcole has surprisingly sharp teeth, and has been known to tear apart unwary victims who think he is no more than bestial in intelligence. Arcole speaks three languages: English, Italian, and some seemingly telepathic communication with feline animals.

Type: Inconspicuous

Telltale: He looks like an imp.

Desire: Caviar (preferably beluga)

Need: Raw meat (any red meat)

Stamina: 2 (Wiry and small)

Will: 4 (Arrogant and sarcastic)

Lore: 3 (Adept, still learning)

Power: 4

Bind Strength: -4 (in Leighton's favor)

Abilities: Command (Cats), user: Arcole; Traveling (Fly), user: Arcole;

Special Attack (Bite, Lethal), user: Arcole (damage: 2X/X+4)

Fakir Bendsan, Speculator, Investor, Demon of the Fourth Tier

Appearance: An obese blob, vaguely human-shaped, though more viscous. Fakir rarely leaves his home anymore, preferring to deal through intermediaries. He is terrified of sorcerers, who once bound him and forced him to trade in blue-chip stocks for ten years. Since escaping from their clutches, he has retired to his domicile, and sworn that no live human will ever step foot in his presence again. He is corpulent and witty, but a real pain-in-the-ass when it comes to getting information from him. Fakir deliberately exaggerates his Middle Eastern accent when speaking to those who demand English or any European language as the medium of conversation. Though he is only Fourth Tier, he seems to feel invulnerable, a fact that may be the prelude to his downfall.

Type: Inconspicuous

Telltale: Pentagram brand on his chest that oozes a thick yellow fluid from the points

Desires: Wine, sex, tobacco

Needs: Food, fine clothing, money (about \$5000 per week)

Stamina: 9 (Corpulent Size)

Will: 10 (Shrewd and manipulative)

Lore: 5 (Uninterested)

Power: 10

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Armor, user: Fakir; Big, user: Fakir; Confuse, User: Fakir;

Perception (speculation of futures prices), user: Fakir; Special Damage (can force someone to gain weight, eventually forcing a heart attack, nonlethal), user: Fakir (damage: X+10/X)

Blackheart, President, Alternative Air corporation, Demon of the Third Tier

Appearance: Classically demonic, Blackheart appears as a crimson-skinned, creature on goat legs with horns, tail, even carrying a pitchfork. When Blackheart speaks, plumes of sulphurous smoke bellows forth. Though Blackheart has a fearsome appearance, and a slightly odd name, the man is actually quite harmless, by nature, not by power. Blackheart detests violence, having been forced into the armies of Thebes eons ago before escaping to begin his drug trade. Though he is quite capable of rending people limb from limb, he prefers having other do it for him after he leaves. He finds blood unsettling. If cornered and pressed, he will fight, and viciously, he just dislikes having to do so. At odds with this attitude, however, is his love for old and ancient weaponry. Blackheart has one of the most extensive collections of pre-gunpowder era weaponry in existence

Type: (In)conspicuous

Telltale: Just about the entirety of this creature's appearance

Desires: use of *proper* archaic English ("thee", "thy", "thou", etc.), ancient weaponry (for collection purposes only)

Needs: Wealth (\$1000 per week), Drugs

Stamina: 8 (Naturally Fit)

Will: 9 (Quick Study)

Lore: 7 (Long-lived Experience)

Power: 9

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Armor, user: Blackheart; Daze, user: Blackheart; Hint, user: Blackheart; Mark, user: Blackheart; Protection (Fire), user: Blackheart; Special Damage (Fire-Breath, Ranged, Lethal), user: Blackheart (damage: 2X/X+9); Taint, user: Blackheart; Vitality, user: Blackheart

Building 27A, Bound Demon of Leighton Craig, Demon of the Fourth Tier

Appearance: A three-story warehouse. The entire building is the demon, and thus it has control over its own electrical systems and relevant internal systems. Building 27A has a quiet and unassuming attitude, but has been known to kill those attempting to graffiti its walls. It can speak, and when it chooses to do so, the voice emanates from the intercom system built-in to the building. Its Need involving books is usually a demand for rare and out-of-print books that Leighton tries very hard to find. As a result, the building has caused most to assume that Leighton is a collector of old books, which he is not.

Type: Object

Telltale: Constant shadows that flicker and dance, even in "brightly" lit rooms

Desires: Antique furniture, fresh paint jobs

Needs: Heating (electric only, no gas), must be read to (demon chooses the book)

Stamina: 10 (Good engineering)
Will: 11 (Well-read and insightful)
Lore: 6 (Living library)
Power: 11
Bind Strength: +3 (in the Building's favor)
Abilities: Armor, user: Building 27A; Confuse, user: Building 27A; Hold, user (Leighton); Perception ("sees" everything in entire building at once), user: Leighton; Psychic Force, user (Leighton); Shadow, user: Building 27A

George Carvellian, Branch Manager of First America Bank, Sorcerer

Appearance: A man of indeterminate descent. George seems cloaked in mystery and intrigue. It is unknown how or why he does it, but his very physical features seem to slide away from rational comprehension. Most can recall the man's dress and mannerisms, as well as a gold pocketwatch that he is famous for, but the color of his eyes, tint of his skin, all of it seems an uncertain blur to everyone he meets. The truth behind this is a perpetual "cloak" ability conferred to him by his pocketwatch, which is actually a demon.

Telltale: unknown

Stamina: 4 (Athletic Regimen)

Will: 6 (Self-Assured)

Lore: 4 (Advanced Student)

Cover: 6 (Bank Manager)

Price: Arrogant, -1 to Perception Rolls involving detection of hidden agendas

Humanity: 5

Abilities (from Tick-Tock, with George as user): Fast, Hold, Travel (50-foot teleportation)

Bound Demon: Tick-Tock (see below)

Leighton Craig, Consular of the Warehousing District, Sorcerer

Appearance: A man of European descent in his late fifties. Leighton is always well-dressed, and his hair is cropped short and is black with a streak of bright purple running along the left side of his head. Leighton is calm, especially under pressure, and is not given to emotional outburst. For some unknown reason, however, Leighton has an unnatural fear of fire, which extends to even lighters and matches. He detests smoking and similar habits, and will refuse to speak to anyone who is smoking, and possibly demand that such people leave his presence.

Telltale(s): Purple streak through the hair, forked tongue

Stamina: 3 (Natural Physique)

Will: 8 (Quiet Pride)

Lore: 7 (Master)

Cover: 8 (Lawyer)

Price: Cynical, -1 to Humanity Checks

Humanity: 2

Power: 1

Ability (conferred by Power 1): Mark

Abilities (from Building 27A, with Leighton as user): Hold, Perception
("sees" everything in Building 27A), Psychic Force

Bound Demons: Building 27A (see above), Arcole (see above)

Jimmy Gri ms, Consular of the Gambling District, Demon of the Fourth Tier

Appearance: Jimmy appears as PUNCHINELLO. Everything about his appearance gives the perception of his being the grotesque hunchback. He is always smiling, even when angered, and his eyes are glittering black "x"s. Jimmy is a murderous savage, though he hides it well beneath a facade of laughter and merrymaking. He is a true homicidal killer, and has little concept of punishment, other than it is something to be avoided. To Jimmy, murder is something that he must do, not a matter of choice on his part. He has been lucky thus far, but it is unlikely that his derangement will stand much longer. Despite all of this, he is a shrewd businessman, and a powerful being in his own right. Few will stand against Jimmy, even if his murderous side is exposed, if for no other reason than he is an efficient and just ruler, whatever his problems in other areas. When in his casino, he is all business, though he is constantly terrified someone will not have a good time at his establishment. When George Carvellian came to his casino and lost over three hundred thousand dollars in less than an hour, Jimmy was so certain that George would never return that Jimmy fronted the CEO one-quarter million dollars of his own money to give George a chance to win the money back. George lost that as well, but has never gone to any other casino since that night.

Type: Inconspicuous

Telltale: he's a grotesque...

Desires: Keeping patrons happy, being popular

Needs: Murder, cannibalism (demon or human will suffice), mayhem

Stamina: 10 (Incredibly Powerful)

Will: 11 (Brilliant Madman, an Idiot Savant to the *n*th degree)

Lore: 10 (Experience)

Power: 11

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Armor, user: Jimmy; Big, user: Jimmy; Confuse, user: Jimmy; Perception (can "see" emotions), user: Jimmy; Protection (Fire, Acid, Disease, Cold); Psychic Force, user: Jimmy; Vitality, user: Jimmy

Harbingers, Spawn of Heidrich Pluvian, Demons of the First Tier

Appearance: These creatures appear as small whirlwinds of dust with long, shredded wings tapering into the distance behind them. The cloud itself seems to have some sort of malevolent force behind it, and they

seem to be able to convey exactly what, or whom, they are regarding, without needing eyes or discernible features to express emotion. None have ever heard of these creatures speaking, though it is likely that they have some manner of communicating with Heidrich. The Harbingers are always created for attacking purposes, though some few claim to have seen them carrying small packages or letters on behalf of their creator in the past.

Type: Inconspicuous

Telltale: They are small winged dust-storms

Desires: Unknown (as Heidrich)

Needs: Unknown (as Heidrich)

Stamina: 3

Will: 4

Lore: 3

Power: 4

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Fast, user: Harbinger; Special Damage (Scouring embrace, Lethal), user: Harbinger (damage: $2X/X+4$); Travel (Fly), user: Harbinger

Breen Kagen, Mayor of Pandemonium, Demon of the Seventh Tier

Appearance: Breen has been known to appear in a variety of forms, and in a number of places at once. Breen seems exempt from the restriction of standard powers granted to specific Tiers as described within the “Measurements and Powers of Hell” section. The Mayor has ruled the City on behalf of Damien for centuries, and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. Some assume Breen is actually one facet of Damien himself, though this is definitely false as Damien’s power level is incalculably higher than Breen Kagen’s. In most cases, Breen is a considerate conversationalist, though with an air of impatience at ideas and thoughts that it deems prosaic. These topics can be nearly anything, and Breen seems fickle with its attentions and patronage. Most avoid Breen, though many of the more influential personages of Pandemonium must endure its presence at least once each year during the Winter Ball (a misnomer as seasonal changes are unheard of in the province of Pandemonium, it seems to always be “Autumn weather”). Invitations are notoriously rare, though the oddest people seem to receive them (even some Tourists visiting that weekend). None in their right minds would refuse an invitation, a fact Breen must be aware of but seems to either ignore or forget, as it seems tickled that all of these people would visit its humble abode each year (occasionally, Damien puts in a momentary appearance, but this is rare).

Type: Unknown

Telltale: Varies

Desires: Unknown

Needs: Unknown

Stamina, Will, Lore, Power: Do not bother, just assume it is enough to succeed... always

Bind Strength: That is a joke, right?

Abilities: Yes

Redgrave Musk, Consular of the Shopping District, Demon of the Sixth Tier

Appearance: In her natural form, Redgrave appears as a swarm of insects, and spaks with the drone of a thousand voices. When in a body, however, she speaks with a feminine voice, slightly southern in accent. Redgrave is a mild-mannered demon, despite her incredible power. She prefers sexuality and persuasion to force, but has been known to “remove” those who stand in her way too long. Currently, she is engaged in a turf war with Jimmy Grims, battling over the industry of brothels and bordellos. Redgrave is definitely more in touch with the industry, but the incentives offered by Jimmy Grims is proving too tempting for many to pass up.

Type: Parasite

Telltale: Even inside a host she is a swarm of insects

Desires: The company of men, Wealth (\$5000 per week), Plush Items (pillows, etc.)

Needs: Sex, Seduction (quite different from sex), Respect

Stamina: 8 (Unnatural Power)

Will: 16 (Near God-like Intellect)

Lore: 12 (Ancient Power)

Power: 16

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Armor, user: Redgrave; Confuse (not useable when in a host), user: Redgrave; Perception (360-degree sight, see in dark, see power-level of demons); Protection (Fire, Acid, Cold), user: Redgrave; Shadow, user: Redgrave; Special Damage (Ranged, Biting swarm of insects, Lethal, not useable in a host), user: Redgrave (damage: $2X/X+16$); Travel (Fly, not useable in a host), user: Redgrave

Heidrich Pluvian, Consular of the Banking District, Demon of the Fifth Tier

Appearance: Heidrich, at first glance, has human aspect. However, gazing at the slightly overweight man a second time allows for the obvious realization that he has a second set of arms. The cause for the mistake at first is that Heidrich often keeps one set clasped behind him, and the second clasped over his belly as he walks, as if doubly in contemplation. While he is professional at all times, his black-stained tongue seems to loll about in his mouth, seemingly at random, though it seems to have no impact upon his speech at all. In fact, Heidrich’s voice seems a cavernous echo that emanates from all around the listener, rather than Heidrich’s own mouth. It is said, quietly yet often, that Heidrich was once a sorcerer who attempted to bind Damien. Damien punished the foolish human, condemning the sorcerer to life as a demon for 1001 years. Heidrich has

served as Consular for the Banking District for nearly five hundred years (by Hell's standards), and it is unknown how long he has been condemned to this life previous to his ascent to Consular. In dress, Heidrich favors classic Japanese dress, seemingly from the Han Dynasty, though most note that the style and bearing of the man is at odds with this clothing.

Type: Inconspicuous

Telltale: Four arms, black tongue, voice, possibly others

Desires: Unknown

Needs: Unknown

Stamina: 3 (Naturally Fit)

Will: 10 (Insightful and Discerning)

Lore: 9 (Vast Knowledge)

Power: 10

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Command (Special, can Command humans to commit one non-violent, legal act by roll Will vs. The target's Will), user: Heidrich; Cover (Banker, Investigator), user: Heidrich; Mark, user: Heidrich; Perception (may determine veracity of any statement), user: Heidrich; Spawn (Harbingers, see above), user: Heidrich; Travel (may pass through solid objects), user: Heidrich; Vitality, user: Heidrich

Xi an Shi h, Clothing Designer, Demon of the Second Tier

Appearance: An unnaturally thin human female with near-transparent skin. The eyes of the demon are truly unsettling, appearing a brilliant orange that glow in the dark. The fingers of Xian Shih taper into long, narrow points, perhaps similar to claws, though far too fragile to be used as such. Often, Xian is found in revealing clothing and apparel of her own design. It is said that she despises "fat" people, which seems to include anyone over 100 pounds, despite any health problems this might cause.

Type: Inconspicuous

Telltale: Eyes

Desire: Make clothing

Need: Weight-loss pills

Stamina: 2 (Emaciated)

Will: 5 (Belief System)

Lore: 4 (Learned)

Power: 5

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Cover (Clothing Designer), user: Xian; Daze, user: Xian; Fast, user: Xian; Warp, user: Xian

Hal i fax Thorne, CEO, Acquisition Incorporated, Demon of the Fourth Tier

Appearance: This demon appears so human, he is often mistaken for a sorcerer. However, beneath the expensive suits that he has specially shipped-in from earth, his chest is covered with a scaled flesh. Halifax is

a grim figure at the best of times, and downright depressing in others. He has never been seen to smile, and has an unnatural love of violence and pain. It is known that he has narrowly avoided murder charges on numerous occasions, his only salvation that *he* never touched the victims, only his servants. Halifax is evil in the extreme, and it is highly suggested that extreme caution be observed when dealing with this enigmatic and vicious creature.

Type: Passing

Telltale: Scaled flesh on torso

Desires: Expensive clothing, fear (in others), fine wine

Needs: Pain (torture), scarification (in others), possibly murder (unknown)

Stamina: 5 (Athletic Regimen)

Will: 11 (Sociopathic Genius)

Lore: 10 (Arcane Lord)

Power: 12

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Confuse, user: Halifax; Daze, user: Halifax; Hold, user: Halifax; Mark, user: Halifax; Perception (he can see fear), user: Halifax; Psychic Force, user: Halifax; Shapeshift (a horde of spiders), user: Halifax; Special Damage (only useable while Shapeshifted, Poisonous Bite, Lethal), user: Halifax (damage: 2X/X+12); Taint, user: Halifax; Vitality, user: Halifax

Tick-Tock, Bound Demon of George Carvellian, Demon of the Second Tier

Appearance: A shiny gold pocketwatch that seems to command attention and draw the eye of those in its presence.

Type: Object

Telltale: Unnaturally bright and gleaming, hour marks are inscribed backward (counter-clockwise)

Desire: the company of other timepieces (handcrafted pieces, not off-the-rack crap)

Need: Must be cleaned each day

Stamina: 3 (Metal Shell)

Will: 5 (Systematic Thought)

Lore: 4 (Young Demon)

Power: 5

Bind Strength: -1 (in George's favor)

Abilities: Cloak, user: Tick-Tock; Fast, user: George; Hold, user: George; Travel (50-foot teleportation), user: George

Juniper Vanschek, Political Lobbyist, Demon of the Fourth Tier

Appearance: Naturally, Juniper appears as a cloud of mist, tinged with red spiderwebs of power. When within a host, however, Juniper appears as whatever the host appears as, though his presence always causes the flesh of the host to appear with red tendrils of blood beneath the skin, as if

many blood vessels have burst. In either form, the voice of Juniper is an ethereal moaning, each word drawn into a long, exaggerated sound. Juniper is constantly giggling at anything, especially statements that have absolutely no humor value. His reputation for treachery is well-founded, and he will backstab and break any deal that is not formally contracted as soon as it becomes profitable to do so.

Type: Possessor

Telltale: Red network of energy or blood vessels

Desires: Hosts (he collects them as people collect figurines), mischief, jokes

Needs: Smoking (he claims it aids “cohesion”), theft, murder (not widely known)

Stamina: 4 (Supernatural Power)

Will: 10 (Machiavellian Intellect)

Lore: 9 (Scholar)

Power: 10

Bind Strength: nil (unbound)

Abilities: Cloak, user: Juniper; Confuse, user: Juniper; Hold, user: Juniper; Hop, user: Juniper; Link, user: Both (not useable when not bound); Perception (see in darkness), user: Juniper; Special Damage (Choke, not useable when in a Host, Nonlethal), user: Juniper (damage: $X+10/2X$); Travel (Fly, not useable when in Host), user: Juniper

Zeitungst, Consular of the Residential District, Demon of the Sixth Tier

Appearance: Zeitgeist is a demon of unknown origin. It is supposed that he was once the member of an entire breed of demons once known as the Zeitgeist. However, over time, this breed has either hidden itself away or died out. Zeitgeist, the Consular, seem reluctant to speak of such matters, but does proclaim an unnatural distaste for the Centurions, a breed of demon common in the Underworld, and many suspect that the Centurions may be at least partially responsible for the downfall of the Zeitgeist race. The Consular, however, is extraordinarily powerful, by far the most powerful of the ruling class in Pandemonium, with the exception of Damien himself, and the Mayor, Breen Kagen. Zeitgeist appears as a wavering pattern of light, akin to a localized rainbow. However, the demon is missing the color green in its spectrum, and never uses the color in any dealings or clothing when in a host. The reason for this is unknown, but Zeitgeist is fanatical about its avoidance. When speaking, Zeitgeist’s voice is a telepathic buzz in the minds of those being spoken to. Other not party to the conversation hear a high-pitched whine, similar to a high-powered electronic device, though its source is not automatically evident. Within a host, the whine and telepathy is still present, despite the additional use of conventional speech from the host body.

Type: Possessor

Telltale: Aversion to green, stiff movements within host body, rainbow appearance outside of host
Desires: Unknown
Needs: Must change hosts once per week, others unknown
Stamina: 24 (Supernatural Power and Unnatural Resistance)
Will: 25 (Nearly Omniscient)
Lore: 11 (Restricted by Superiors)
Power: 25
Bind Strength: nil (unbound, would you try it?)
Abilities: Armor, user: Zeitgeist; Confuse, user: Zeitgeist; Daze, user: Zeitgeist; Perception (seems to see in all spectrums at once), user: Zeitgeist; Protection (Acid, Cold, Disease, Fire, Piercing); Psychic Force, user: Zeitgeist; Vitality, user: Zeitgeist



Mechanics of Hell.

Within Hell, most things operate as they do on earth, with some minor differences. Explained previously is the dynamics of Humanity and Power, and thus they are not restated here. Below are detailed the breaking points for demons advancing through Tiers, as well as other odds and ends that must be dealt with.

Sorcery in Hell

The core of the sorcerer, the ability to manipulate demons through a variety of means, is unchanged within Hell. Though a sorcerer must have at least one point of Humanity to bind a demon, all other facets of the sorcerer are unchanged by the unfortunate transition from live body to damned soul.

Eating the Damned (for fun and profit)

A common method for the less scrupulous sorcerer is the process of consuming the Damned. Eating your fellow man's soul is one manner of gaining Humanity, though it does have its drawbacks. Every damned soul has one-half a Humanity point. If the damned soul is "killed" (through damage or in some other conventional manner), this Humanity can be captured by a snap-shot Contain. This allows one die on the sorcerer's part, and is resisted by one die on the damned soul's part. Should the sorcerer win, he gains one-half a Humanity Point. Should the sorcerer lose, he gains one Power point (see above (and below) for dynamics of Humanity and Power). No more than one full Humanity point may be gained by a sorcerer in a given year through this method (standard Hell year, not earth year).

A dead soul in Hell that is not a sorcerer's soul (as described earlier, sorcerer's gain Power rather than dying... ain't life a bitch?) is "killed". No one is certain what killed entails, but most assume it means that the soul is consumed by nothingness to reside within the belly of the Morninglord, where it is transformed through millennia of

torture and pain into a servitor of Hell. This may or may not be true, but it certainly keeps suicide rates low for the Condemned.

Power and the Price:

As a sorcerer progresses through the course of losing Humanity and possibly gaining Power, certain features change. First and foremost, the sorcerer gains abilities similar to a demon (as if a demon with a Lore skill equal to the sorcerer's Power). However, the more the Power, the more the Price. On the table below is explained what is gained with every step of Power. It is also important to note that a sorcerer with Power may be Punished as a demon, which acts in all ways as it normally should. Should Power be reduced to a negative amount, then the sorcerer begins to take Lasting Damage in excess of the amount of their Power.

Power	Penalty
1	1 new Tell-tale
2	1 new Price
3	1 new Tell-tale
4	1 new Desire
5	1 new Need
6	1 new Tell-tale
7	1 new Price
8	1 new Tell-tale
9	1 new Desire
10	1 new Need

How to use Lore in Hell

It should be noted that Lore will be a major focus of what a sorcerer knows of Hell. There are two methods to resolve this. The first method is to assign any given trait an arbitrary number, which is what a sorcerer would need in Lore to have knowledge of the trait. This method is quick and cuts down on dice rolling. The second method, which may be a bit more accurate in terms of actual knowledge, would be to assign a number, as above, but have this be the resistance dice for a Lore roll to have knowledge of the trait. Either method will work, and it is entirely the province of the GM to decide which method is the preferred method.

Demon Tiers

Each Tier has powers and rights described previously. However, in order to ascend the ladder of power, a demon must grow in strength and scope. Below is a rough estimate of what Power level is required for each Tier, which allows most to understand what Tier of demon most sorcerers bind and make use of on earth.

It is important to note that the Power scores given below are *guidelines*, and not steadfast rules. It is entirely possible (though slightly unlikely) that a Power 3 demon could wield enough influence and contacts to be rated at the Fourth Tier, or even a high Power demon rated at a lower Tier.

Also, for purposes of drama and uncertainty, the GM may feel free to use a demon's Tier ranking as a bonus resistance to sorcerous powers, such as Binding, Punishing, Contacting, and so on. These should only apply when in Hell, and represents a demon's inherent profanity and purpose when in its home domain.

Power Level	Tier Ranking
1-3	First
4-6	Second
7-9	Third
10-12	Fourth
13-15	Fifth
16-18	Sixth
19-21(?)	Seventh
GM Option	Eighth
Pure Insanity	Ninth

Killing demons in Hell

Killing a demon, through Punishing it to nothing, then beating the Hell out of it, damage, or Banishment, destroys a demon in Hell. There is no coming back, no revenge to worry about (well, from that demon anyway). Killing them in Hell, kills them dead.

How to integrate this into another setting

In the story, it is the near future, with small differences in that the land value around Lincoln Park has gone to Hell (literally), and obviously demons have their place in Hell. Should you desire an actual setting basis for the Chicago of this world, I suggest looking over Ron Edwards' *Demon Cops* setting, and making adjustments to set it with Hell. It could even coincide that this Hell is the mind of the slumbering demon in that setting.

This setting is intended to be used in a modern day setting where Celestial Resorts is a company, and the gates of Hell are open. However, with little modification, this would be unnecessary. It would be a small trouble to adjust everything to be disconnected from earth (as in no gate that opens on earth). This setting would work perfectly well for a Dante-esque trip through Hell, as well as a supplementary setting focused upon the modern or post-modern day.

As always, the setting information and details of this product, or any *Sorcerer* product, is only limited by the imagination and ingenuity of the people involved in the game. Go nuts, throw-out what you don't want, keep what you do. I have intentionally left most of the provinces of Hell vague and undefined so that someone else could easily take an entire province of Hell and put their own spin on it. Have fun!

In The Flesh:

Most sorcerers who enter Hell through the traditional manner, meaning Humanity loss, will eventually attempt to return to the flesh of their birth. While escaping Hell does present the most challenging portion of this journey, actually forcing the controlling demon from the body holds some degree of difficulty.

To understand this, it is important to know that the demon that was the *last demon to cause Humanity loss* is the controlling demon. Thus, if it was a previously bound demon, the sorcerer will know that demon rather well. However, if it was a demon who tempted the sorcerer into actions that were less than humane, or used the power "Taint", it is possible that the sorcerer will have little knowledge of the demon now moving their flesh about as some obscene puppet.

The demon controlling the body does not have to be in the body in order to control it. Instead, the body becomes a form of avatar to the demon. The demon may still operate its own body (whatever that might be), as well as the human body. The body is effectively just a shell that can be controlled and moved.

What actions the demon in control of the body decides to have the flesh take should be entirely the decision of the GM. Most demons will indulge in its Needs and Desires, attempting to fulfill itself so that it might continue to exist on earth.

When the sorcerer escapes Hell and comes knocking on his own flesh's door, however, the demon is unlikely to relinquish control. There are two manners of handling this dilemma.

The first method is to engage in a contest of the demon's Will against either the sorcerer's Will or Lore (whichever the sorcerer prefers) plus Humanity. While this is a brief and fast roll, the GM should make the most of this, as the sorcerer is effectively attempting to "force" himself or herself into their own body, while forcing the demon's control away from the body. Lengthy descriptions, and even multiple rolls should be considered, as this sort of psychic contest holds no small amount of consequence for both parties of the contest. Failing to take possession of his or her body forces the sorcerer to lose one Humanity and force him or her to return to Hell for at least one week.

The second method is to have the sorcerer inhabit an interim body (usually someone dead and in the morgue). The sorcerer must physically rise and seek-out his or her old body. Physical contact is all that is needed to return to the original flesh, though finding that flesh can be a difficult proposition.

Whichever method is chosen, the main focus of the journey should be the escape of Hell itself. Below are a few methods of leaving Hell that can be considered. It should be noted, however, that all but being summoned requires at least one Humanity point on the part of the sorcerer to accomplish. Being summoned allows the sorcerer to attempt to take control of the summoning sorcerer as in the first method (above) of regaining the body. However, in this episode, the sorcerer being summoned acts as the demon

(meaning the sorcerer summoned must overcome the summoning sorcerer's Will or Lore plus Humanity). Should the summoned sorcerer succeed, that sorcerer takes control of the body, sending the summoning sorcerer to Hell. This is always enough to cause a Humanity check.

The sorcerer, should he or she gain a body through being summoned, must still gain a positive Humanity score within thirteen days or be sent back to Hell. However, should the sorcerer accomplish this, then the sorcerer can attempt to find his or her old body (advisable, as the sorcerer just sent to Hell will likely be back wanting his or her body) under the rules described for the second method.

Possible Escape Routes from Hell:

-*Cerberus Gate*: The easiest method in theory, though difficult in practice, escape through Cerberus Gate requires making a Pact with the guardians of the gate. These guardians are three-headed dogs, who are known for seeming to ask the impossible. All of their requirements for a Pact are made for a single return: escape. These creatures know that sorcerers looking to leave Hell will do anything, and they make certain that they benefit. Historically, their end of any Pact is given through riddles, such as requiring eternity placed at their feet. The answer, of course, is the request for a watch or clock. A new problem presented, however, is *where* in Hell one can obtain such an item.

-*Dis*: Scaling the huge walls of the resort, or stowing away on a transport back into the resort seems a perfectly plausible escape route. However, passport checks and authentication of travelers is required before leaving Dis for Cerberus Gate. In order to gain passage through these checkpoints, large bribes, carefully constructed lies and false papers, and no small degree of luck is generally required.

-*Mini ng Transport*: Leaving from the Wastes, Hades, or the Factory, these transports are the most common method of escape for sorcerers. In recent months, security checkpoints have been bolstered, and no fewer than twelve sorcerers returned to bondage since these new precautions. However, stowing away on a transport can be successful, though plans for bribery and subterfuge are highly suggested.

-*Being Summoned*: Rare, though possible, a sorcerer with a Power rating may be summoned by someone who knows who to summon and when. While this can function as "insurance" to those sorcerers unfortunate enough to be damned, most feel this is a double-edged sword. Summoned sorcerers must gain 1 Humanity before one week passes or be returned to Hell. In addition, the possible Humanity loss from a friendly sorcerer can limit the number of times a compatriot is willing to chance calling forth the sorcerer.

-*Atonement*: Quickly becoming the most popular form of escape, Jonathan Lane and Abdiel have created a corporation known as Celestial Contracts and Acquisitions. This company has a proposed plan for aiding in the "recovery" of damned sorcerers. This process begins by the sorcerer making the first appointment for a "work-release permit", which grants the sorcerer Citizen status if required. The sorcerer then has a set of goals, ranging from the aiding in the escape of other damned souls, to finding and reporting upon other sorcerers. These goals are often manifold, though entirely possible to accomplish. Currently, Jonathan and Abdiel have started creating groups of sorcerers to set to tasks, as the success rate of these groups seems higher than singular operatives.

The fastest “Atonement” on record is six months, and this person was close to attaining escape through other channels already. This method is also the only legal method.

Suggested Music:

Assemblage23: “Failure”, though others are appropriate as well. contact: www.assemblage23.com

Beethoven: Any

Covenant: “Dreams of a Cryotank”, “United States of Mind” contact: Metropolis Records

Cruciform Injection: “Biomechanical Disintegration”, “Response Stimuli” contact: www.cruciforminjection.com

Decoded Feedback: “Evolution”, “Mechanical Horizon” contact: Metropolis Records

Din_Fiv: “Escape to Reality” contact: Metropolis records

Electric Hellfire Club: “Burn, Baby, Burn”, “Kiss the Goat” contact: Cleopatra Records

Evil’s Toy: “Angels Only”, “Illusion”, “Silvertears” contact: Metropolis Records

Funker Vogt: “Execution Tracks”, “Maschine Zeit”, “T” contact: Metropolis Records

Informatik: “Direct Memory Access, version 2.0”, “Syntax” contact: Metropolis Records

Kevorkian Death Cycle: “Collection for Injection”, “Dark Skies”, “A+O(m)” contact: Metropolis Records

Klute: “Excepted”, “Excluded” contact: Cleopatra Records

Laeather Strip: “Carry Me”, “Fit for Flogging”, “Legacy of Hate and Lust”, “Underneath the Laughter” contact: Cleopatra Records and Metropolis Records

Numb: “Language of Silence”, “Wasted Sky” contact: Metropolis Records

Project Pitchfork: “Chakra Red”, “Eon:Eon” contact: Metropolis Records

Psychopomps: “666 Nights in Hell” contact: Cleopatra Records

Razed in Black: “Overload”, “Shrieks, Lamentations, and Anguished Cries” contact: Cleopatra Records

Tchaikovsky: Any

Wagner: Any (seriously, any)

Verdi: Any (primarily earlier works, such as Attila)

VNV Nation: “Burning Empires” contact: Metropolis Records

Xeromix: “A Daemoniac Dream of Delirium” contact: porsaline_mask@aol.com

-Most of the music found here is available through www.isotank.com or www.infrarot.de Many of the bands have other albums other than those mentioned here. I have included the albums I feel fit the mood of this supplement.

Suggested Reading:

The Koran (Qu'ran)

The Holy Bible: notably *The Old Testament*

The Apocrypha

The Kaballah

Alighieri, Dante: notably *The Divine Comedy*

Armstrong, Karen: notably *A History of God*

Barker, Clive: notably *Books of Blood*

Bisson, Terry: notably *The Pickup Artist* and *Pirates of the Universe*

Camus, Albert

Crowley, Aleistar: notably *The World's Tragedy*

Ellison, Harlan

Goethe, Johann von: notably *Faust*

Kafka, Franz: notably *The Trial* and *The Castle*

Kierkegaard, Soren: notably *Fear and Trembling* and *On Concluding Unscientific*

Postscript

Marley, Christopher: notably *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*

Milton, John: notably *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*

Monteleone, Thomas F.

Nasir, Jamil: notably *Tower of Dreams*

Swanwick, Michael: notably *Jack Faust*

Wolfe, Gene

Role-Playing Games:

Sorcerer the Roleplaying Game by Adept Press (but you know this one)

Call of Cthulhu by Chaosium

Kult by Metropolis, Ltd.

Obsidian: The Age of Judgement by the Apophis Consortium,

www.apophisconsortium.com

www.memento-mori.com for wonderful free games





Disclosure Agreements, the conclusion by Dav Harnish

“Death is not the end; there remains the litigation.”
-Ambrose Bierce

George Carvellian smiled at the man seated at the desk in the office. Behind the man, a slightly melancholy figure stood, watching a point somewhere in the middle of the two people. George was familiar with the strange habits of Abdiel, the seemingly detached man in the background. Jonathan Lane, however, was seemingly on edge today.

“I assure, Mr. Lane, the figures are accurate,” repeated George Carvellian with no small degree of trepidation, “Your account balances have swelled over three million dollars in the last year alone. All of the deposits were made earth-side.”

Abdiel stirred slightly at the revelation that someone on earth was funding the operation. It was the most reaction George had ever seen from the angel, but the wizened sorcerer was wise enough to pretend not to notice the movement.

“Very well, George,” replied Jonathan, his voice tinged with concern, “Please have your people earth-side try to track the deposits.”

George nodded, stepping from the office. As he walked, he could see confusion cross the faces of those he passed. Most did a double-take, some merely seeming uncomfortable. It was commonplace for George Carvellian, who preoccupied himself with winding his gold pocketwatch. With a final glance over his shoulder at the closing door of Jonathan Lane’s office, George rounded a corner, nearly causing an aide to drop a stack of papers in shock. A slight ticking echoed around the man, and the rush of wind passed by the aide, who blinked in confusion.

Outside the building, the door to George Carvellian’s limousine was held open by a chauffeur, George seemed to step from the middle of the entryway stairs of the building, leaving Celestial Contracts and Acquisitions behind him.

“Abdiel, do you think it was Michael?” asked Jonathan, watching the limousine pull away from the building. There was no need to mention what he was referring to, Abdiel was already leafing through the report.

“I would think so, John,” replied Abdiel, double-checking the figures by reflex and finding no errors, “It shouldn’t really surprise you.”

“I never wanted Michael to feel indebted to me,” Jonathan replied, turning from the window of the modest office to look over Abdiel’s shoulder, “I never wanted any of them to feel indebted to me.”

“Generosity is an honest result of kindness,” replied Abdiel, dropping into what Jonathan affectionately referred to as “The Sermon Voice”.

“When Damien made the deal with us, I honestly did not think it would amount to much,” continued Jonathan, though it was an old story, one that Abdiel knew as well as anyone else. “How many have we returned?”

“Seventeen,” replied Abdiel unnecessarily, both knew the answer.

“When Michael left, I was certain he would return to his old life,” continued Jonathan, “He worked hard at changing, but I always knew that the taint of the sorcerer was deep in him.”

Abdiel did not reply. The discussion was an old one. The angel maintained that sorcery was not inherently evil. Jonathan felt that to utilize powers of the sort wielded by most “gifted” was the supreme act of hubris. Jonathan felt that sorcery was a test by God to tempt those who had the ability to do great good, but with a darker manifestation that could easily be used for selfish purposes. As for Jonathan himself, he had never used the sorcery he felt coursing through his body, though on occasion the temptation did exist.

“Ah, well,” sighed Jonathan, “How many today?”

“Three,” replied Abdiel, looking over the appointment logs, “Two of them should never even have made it this far in the interviewing process. The third, Sarah Peterson, has helped to free ten Damned and was instrumental in aiding Michael’s escape.”

“Very well, let’s cancel the other two,” said Jonathan, watching Abdiel draw a line through the two nameless appointments. The pair would be given a list of requirements to be completed before being allowed to return for application for Atonement.

Sarah Peterson stood calmly, awaiting entry into the office of Mr. Lane. She held a manila folder to her breast as if it was her one hope of salvation, and indeed, it may well have been. When the secretary announced that Mr. Lane would see her, she stood nervously, walking on unsteady legs. The door to the office was open, and she could see Abdiel, the angelic liaison standing a few inches above the carpeted floor of the office.

The angel’s eyes roamed over the woman appraisingly, seeming to look past the flesh into her very essence. The liaison’s eyes widened in shock as they came to rest on the folder, and with quick strides, the angel was carried through the air to stand before Sarah.

“You found them?” asked Abdiel, his eyes locked on the folder.

“O-one of them,” replied Sarah, her voice shaking despite herself.

“You’re certain?” spoke Abdiel, very carefully, as if trying to force the severity of the situation upon Sarah. She shifted away from the angel nervously. Behind the angel, she could see Jonathan looming in the doorway, an expression of curiosity on his face.

Frightened at what she originally thought was to be her trump card, Sarah could only nod helplessly. Abdiel, his face grim, looked over his shoulder at Jonathan, who stood calmly, but small lines of tension eased their way around his face.

“Jonathan, I respectfully request handling this woman’s case on my own,” spoke Abdiel in formal tones. Jonathan, confused and startled by the request, nodded silently, stepping from his office and gesturing the angel and woman inside.

Wordlessly, Sarah stepped into the office. Abdiel followed, silently, his lips set in a grim line. As soon as he entered the room, the door closed with a quiet click. Outside, Jonathan waited, fidgeting with his hands.

Sarah stood silently, ignoring Abdiel’s gesture to sit.

“Where are they?” spoke Abdiel, drawing forth a sheet of paper. The header of the page was obvious to Sarah, even if she had not been dreaming of its presence for years. “Permit for Readmittance to Earth” read the top in bold letters.

“He has been sold to the factory,” she spoke, gaining confidence from the presence of the paper. She stood straighter, and her voice steadied.

“Give me the file,” requested Abdiel, filling out the paperwork for Sarah wordlessly. Sarah did so, watching as Abdiel signed the bottom-line, approving her for return to earth. Her heart began to beat again, and she sighed in relief as Abdiel handed her the document, holding one corner firmly as she tried to pull it into her custody.

“One final note, Ms. Peterson,” said Abdiel, his voice firm, commanding, “you will speak of the findings within this folder to no one, ever.”

Sarah Peterson nodded, fear cascading over her silently as she felt the resistance on the document release suddenly. She stumbled backward despite herself, nodding the entire time. Without even the courage or breath to thank the angel, Sarah left the office.

Jonathan was quick to enter as the woman left, concern obvious on his face, “What was that about?”

Abdiel held the folder in his hand, shaking his head at Jonathan slightly, “Nothing to concern yourself with, my friend. We have work to do here that is important, and it is part of my duty as your friend to shield you from knowledge that could hurt you or jeopardize your existence.”

Placated slightly, Jonathan nodded. He had always been a believer that knowledge was power, and he did not want that power corrupting him if it was that deadly. He gazed once more in curiosity at the folder, watching as Abdiel circled around the desk.

“I will handle this myself, Jonathan,” replied Abdiel, “There is no need for you to be involved.”

At his home within the residential district of Pandemonium, Abdiel checked the wards over his home. He knew that most could not even begin to intrude upon his home, but he wanted to make certain. After affirming to himself that he was alone, Abdiel opened the folder, reading the name at the top of the file: “Kevin Montgomery”

Quietly to himself, Abdiel muttered, “I told you never to let them touch you, old friend.”

Abdiel read the file thoroughly, then stood quietly, knowing that he had to get Kevin Montgomery far from the province of Pandemonium. There was no body left for his soul to escape to, Abdiel had made certain that the body housing the demon that had usurped Kevin’s control was destroyed by the time the transport had arrived on earth.

“I owe you this much, at least,” spoke Abdiel as his body faded from view, shifting into the realm of the Factory.

The constant grinding of the gears and the harsh hiss of the bellows told him he had arrived. Thousands of souls labored upon the assembly line, forever producing parts of varying nature, never to see the finished product that would emerge miles down the line.

As Abdiel strode across the air, his patent leather shoes striding over the garbage and offal of the ground without actually touching it, a foreman halted his movement.

“You should not be here, angel,” growled the pig-faced imp, holding out an arm that was burdened with a bloody scourge. Abdiel smiled slightly, though anger sparked behind his blue eyes, “Get thee behind me.”

The words were laced with command, and the imp had no choice but to fall away before the might of the angel. A squeal of terror echoed down the line, lost amidst the churning gears and damned souls. Abdiel was already striding past the demon, seeking his charge.

“Master, show me the way,” murmured Abdiel, his eyes shining with a wrath not felt in centuries. The dim lighting of the factory flared to life, bulbs shattering under the strain of the power surge. A line of brightly shining lights led to a single damned soul, wailing piteously as another foreman flayed the flesh from his back with gleeful abandon.

“Shibboleth,” spoke Abdiel, looking at the damned one, who stared up at Abdiel with pleading eyes.

“S-sib-s,” the soul of Kevin Montgomery stuttered and stammered under the blows of the whip.

“Say it Kevin, speak the word,” whispered Abdiel, his arms outstretched, ready to intervene.

The foreman’s lash raised and lowered in hypnotic rhythm, each descent prelude to another scream. Kevin writhed beneath the torture, his mouth bloody and lips torn by the leather whip, “S-sibole-sibole,” Kevin whispered piteously.

“Master, give this creature the glory of your righteousness,” whispered Abdiel, pointing at the foreman.

With a squeal of pain and anguish, the foreman’s arm snapped upward, lash held ready. With horror-stricken eyes, the demon watched as the lash descended, twisting angrily in the air to strike at the foreman’s own face. Up-and-down, the cadence of the lash striking flesh sang through the air, unheeded by worker and demon alike. Only three witnessed the wrath of the angel and his unspoken master.

“Come, Kevin, it is time to take you home,” whispered Abdiel.

“Home? Back to my wife?” Kevin’s eyes glinted with tears of joy.

“Yes, back to where you are loved,” whispered Abdiel, kissing Kevin upon the forehead, “I redeem you.”

Kevin’s body began to sag, the light fade from his eyes. As Abdiel laid the man down upon the ground, the very essence of his soul faded from sight, called to another place.

As the body faded, the foreman laughed terribly, his voice twisted in pain, but triumphant. The lash lifted and fell, once, landing upon the angel’s face, tearing away one eye and laying open the cheek of the angel. Abdiel’s hand shot to his face in shock. The pain flooded through his body, but the shock was too much to bear.

“Question the judgement of your master, angel?” chortled the foreman, his arm snapping back for another strike. As the lash descended, however, the angel was already gone.

Back in his home, Abdiel looked in the mirror in shock, staring at his scarred face. As he stepped from the bathroom, the ringing click of his heels against the marble floor echoed mournfully to his own ears.

Credits:

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I hope you enjoyed the setting. Direct feedback to the Sorcerer Forum at Hephaestus' Forge.

Remember kids, smoking is cool.