

**KULT**  
♦ divinity lost ♦

# THE SUMMIT

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# THE SUMMIT

**T**HE SUMMIT IS A SCENARIO ABOUT ISOLATION, AND the horrors humans will perpetrate when given a little push over the edge of sanity. The player characters (PCs) lost something, or someone, and all evidence points to an abandoned part of the city, housing a failed, luxury apartment complex. The reasons for the district's dilapidation are the subject of rumour, but the characters soon discover the truth for the area's abandonment. The PCs must endure body horrors and the subjugations of an Inferno cult if they are to summit the high-rise, and retrieve that which is dear to them. This scenario contains the storyline for a one- or two part game, with guidelines for the Archetypes the gamemaster (GM) could incorporate as PCs.



The characters in this scenario could be any cohesive group capable of action and violence. A distressed group of parents looking for their children, a gang from high school venturing into a hostile environment to prove a point, or even a cohort of mobsters attempting to retrieve their boss' briefcase – any group might want to enter the city blocks for their own desperate reasons. Once they enter, of course, leaving may not be an option.

The scenario commences with action. A group of depraved thugs assault the characters, mugging them, kidnapping loved ones in their care, or perhaps merely wounding their pride. The characters immediately have the opportunity to fight back, but at least some of the antagonists escape into their nearby van, speeding off into the abandoned blocks.

In seeking their objective – whether loved ones, wealth, or recovery of pride – the characters must venture into a quietly hostile region of their home city. The district was abandoned several years before under government authority. Citations that the area was geologically unsafe were common, as were the rumours of a prowling cognate of serial killers, rife gang violence, poisons in the water supply, and something in the architecture that drove inhabitants insane. Though the hostility of the region is subtle to start, it grows to a horrifyingly loud crescendo.

At the centre of the blocks is the Monarch Apartment Complex – the district's pride and joy, and flagship building for the city's expansion. The building's failure contributed hugely to the area's abandonment. The characters' investigations throughout the block all point to the building, but gaining entry to the former luxury high-rise is far from easy, and once inside, escape is almost impossible.

Soon, the PCs discover the sacrifices they must make within the Monarch Apartment Complex, and the losses they must suffer in order to reach its summit. They must endure the actions of a violent Inferno cult dedicated to the Lore of Madness and the Death Angel of Power, Thaumiel. The cult inhabits the building, its high priests residing in the penthouse along with the personal magician of Thaumiel – a mortal naming himself "Monarch" and architect of the high-rise. The characters must appease or fight off the murderers, rapists, and savage cultists if they are to stand any chance of reaching the penthouse. Each floor poses a new, horrifying challenge. As they ascend higher and higher, the building descends further into Inferno. Monarch engineered the entire city district to form a natural gateway, with the apartment complex as its nexus.

## THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

The characters in *The Summit* are a group with a shared cause. Each of them must be capable of violence, whether due to their nature, or extraneous circumstances forcing them to aggressive action. The GM should allow the players to choose which of the following groups they want to play. Each group will result in a slightly different telling of the story, as they must weigh up the worth of the summit, and the sacrifices they will be forced to endure.

### The Parents.

This group of parents are the last out of the school hall following the annual play put on by their children. As the parents are about to depart, having locked up the hall, the cultists emerge from the shadows and snatches the kids. A fight ensues. Even though some children may be saved at this point, the cultists takes the others to the abandoned district. The parents must band together and travel into the desolate city blocks to save their children.

**The High Schoolers.** This gang of high schoolers are a less-refined Breakfast Club, sharing detention until they're kicked out of school at nightfall. The collection of jocks, malcontents, and juvenile delinquents are about to fight one another when the cultists arrive. They slash the high schoolers' tires, batter each of the youths, and speed off into the night with mocking chicken sounds in their wake. The high schoolers must reclaim their pride and give the cultists a damn good beating, despite knowing they're walking into a clear trap.

**The Criminals.** The criminals are in the middle of an important deal, exchanging firearms for cases of cash, when the cultists arrive in force and hold both the buyers and sellers at gunpoint. As the cultists attempt to seize both the cash and the weapons, one of the trigger-happy criminals instigates violence. The cult members escape with sufficient weapons and money to warrant the PCs chasing them down to the abandoned part of town. Going back to their boss without either of these things is a guaranteed death sentence.

**The Junkies.** The junkies do pretty well for themselves, as far as addicts go. That is, until the cult raids their stash house. The cultists' theft of their gear, combined with tales of a much better product's availability in the abandoned sector appeals to the desperate junkies, who lack the money but possess the raw anger to set them on a course of self-destruction.

**The Reality TV Crew.** A group of hard men and women, recruited for a "Haunted City Challenge" are about to film their stay in a supposedly haunted hotel. That's when the cult arrives to steal the filming equipment and footage recorded earlier in the day. For the sake of their pride, a day's work, and the producer's property, the reality TV crew propose to their stars an alternative venue. The cult members head to the worst part of town, and the documentary is now going to show the characters attempting to recover their lost footage.

In short, this scenario requires a group sufficiently desperate to make their journey to the abandoned district believable. The item or people they seek are "the McGuffin" and it/they will be referred to as such throughout the remainder of the scenario.



# SCENARIO THEME

*The Summit* is about isolation, violence, and desperation. The GM should keep these concepts at the forefront of her mind while running this scenario. How far will the characters go to prove a point, rescue a loved one, or impress their boss? Will the desperate reality TV stars risk death for higher ratings? Will the junkies sacrifice their limbs for the best fix of their meagre existences? What losses are the characters prepared to take, and what violence will they mete out to get what they want? How does a group cope when they are the only sane individuals in a city of the damned? When they realise how isolated the Monarch Apartment Complex truly is, will they attempt to flee back home, or embrace their new existence as members of the cult?

The key theme is ascension. *The Summit* requires characters to overcome their weakness and fear, along with their rationality and self-preservation instinct. The PCs know their ultimate reward sits atop the high-rise, but will they sacrifice all that makes them human to reach that peak? By ascending to the summit, the characters will have also ascended beyond human frailty and logic, becoming something other as they enter Inferno.

## TIPS FOR THE GAMEMASTER

The GM should read this scenario in advance of running, or, if not, keep careful track of characters' locations so she can describe the appropriate scenes they encounter.

*Italicised text* appears occasionally throughout this scenario. The GM can either read this aloud, or reword it into something appropriate for the scene. Each central scene has associated text in this format.

This scenario is built around the locations and set pieces. The GM should thoroughly read the information pertaining to each scene so she feels comfortable running each segment.

The GM should describe the abandoned district in advance of the game. It's no secret the game will take place in that area. If your group plays within a large city, choose a run-down area of your surrounding urban environment. The blocks have fallen to poverty and ultimately abandonment. Explain how buildings were routinely evacuated due to unusual geological and gas activity, that crime swiftly dominated the area, and after a rash of killings the city council offered to re-house the district's inhabitants. This latter reason was supposed to be temporary, but few moved back to the abandoned blocks. Those who remained vanished or quietly drifted out of touch. For some inexplicable reason, nobody ever mourned or missed the individuals who remained in the district. Sleepers remained ignorant to anything supernatural taking place around the Monarch Apartment Complex, while Enlightened residents sensed something deeply disturbing lingering in the area.

### Gamemaster Tips to Keep in Mind:

- ◆ Emphasise the cold night, the incessant rain, and the lack of shelter. Despite the frequent vacant buildings in the district, not one has heating, and few have electricity. The characters are still in the city, but it's an urban wilderness.
- ◆ Hammer home the characters' reasons for entering the district. If characters feel they could just leave, the tension disappears.
- ◆ Inevitably, if the group is comprised of the parents of kidnap victims, or a group who had their property stolen, at least one player will suggest their character calls the police. This call can go ahead, but the police offer a curt response. *"The district was purchased wholesale by a property syndicate after it was abandoned, up to and including the roads, pipes, and local grid. Technically, the police line of jurisdiction is everywhere up to that district. Only the military or FBI could warrant entering, no matter the crime. Our hands are tied."*
- ◆ Emphasise the smell of ozone as the rain hammers down, and the stench of age, sweat, and concrete dust as the characters enter abandoned buildings. When the characters first discover a dead body, take the time to explain the greasiness of its skin, the rank odour emanating from its evacuated bowels, and the thick richness of the blood's scent. Evoke players' memories of the breath of a conjunctivitis sufferer, the taste of soured milk imbibed before its rancidity was realised, or the sweet stink of old menstrual blood or rank smegma. Make the district come alive with olfactory senses.
- ◆ The feeling of instability, confusion, and ultimately madness should be placed at the scenario's forefront as the party delve deeper into the district. The cult inhabiting the high-rise dedicate their incantations and rituals to the Lore of Madness, making their appearances and actions unpredictable. Describe an individual to the players in one way, and within the next sentence explain how his face has changed, how his clothes shimmer, how his voice is accompanied by a low wavelength inducing nausea, or how he's just suddenly not there. Play on the characters' perceptions.
- ◆ Play music appropriate to search and survival in a hostile city or apartment complex. The soundtracks to *The Warriors*, *High-Rise*, *A Field in England*, *Assault on Precinct 13*, and *Dawn of the Dead* are particularly appropriate.
- ◆ Though the Novaville residents are often referred to as "savages" in this scenario, and practice every depravation from rape to cannibalism, they are not mindless. Few are idiotic. Instead, their madness manifests as an insidious wisdom, allowing them to charm and placate before abruptly turning on someone with unexpected violence. Remember to play them in this flexible way, as grunting brutes swiftly lose the sense of horror.



The *Summit* handles a scenario told in a non-linear fashion, split across two Acts. Act One comprises set pieces that may be encountered in any order, though the characters will need to experience at least three before they can enter the Monarch Apartment Complex. Entering the high-rise signifies the start of Act Two. While challenges exist on every floor of the Monarch Apartment Complex, it is not obligatory for the characters to encounter each one. The more they experience, the greater the likelihood of achieving their objective. However, the chance of brutally losing a connection to reality also increases.

## THE SCENARIO

The scenario takes place split across the party's home city and Inferno. The characters may not be able to tell the difference between one and other, by the time they've made the journey.

Several years ago, the city's slums received major gentrification treatment. Where once they were called the Ghettos, they became the Projects. As gentrification concluded, the council dubbed the kilometre square part of the city "Novaville," a series of blocks dedicated to urban rejuvenation, prosperity, and renewed commercial interest in a dying city.

Sadly, change did not take hold in this part of the city long drenched in crime, violence, and depravity. Few wealthy individuals took advantage of the new offices, houses, shops, and recreation centres built specifically for their interests. The stain on Novaville was a permanent one, and no amount of polish removed the that the columns and white-washed walls were built atop dead drug dealers, corrupt cops, and worst of all – the unemployed. Buildings were sold to less desirable clientele, who were determined to make the best of it, despite the city council's rapidly fading interest in the area. As far as the governing bodies were concerned, the project failed as soon as the well-to-do declined involvement despite years of promises to the contrary.

The only parts of Novaville that drew massive interest were the pioneering Monarch Apartments. Built as luxury flats with access to every modern amenity, the Monarch Complex contained not only houses, but a supermarket, a bank, leisure centre, a pool encompassing an entire floor, and cinema, as well as other exciting features. Investments in the building came immediately. Middle class professionals made an exodus from their own parts of the city, to occupy the radical new development.

Once the building hit critical mass, every apartment occupied and service facility manned, things started going wrong in Novaville. Through the design of the apartment

complex's architect, the eponymous Mr. Monarch, the district inhabitants immediately began acting strangely. Individuals with no predisposition for crime began committing heinous acts against one another. Property vandalism became commonplace. Muggings, rapes, assaults, and eventually murders spiralled out of control. The police stationed in Novaville adopted an aggressive approach. Routinely, officers handled criminals with deadly violence citing "self-defence" and "pro-active responses." Genuine victims of crimes were told they were wasting time or mocking the police officers. Eventually, the city stepped in and disbanded the precinct for retraining. It was never re-staffed.

Without a police presence, violence ensued unbridled.

Any remaining citizens of unsoiled spirit quickly abandoned the district and swiftly put their brief, turbulent experiences in Novaville from their minds. Few these days could be

pressed into remembering the

district. The people who stayed behind devolved rapidly into territorial savages, fighting wars over buildings and engaging in lethal personal vendettas. Most of these individuals simply disappeared from record. Whether they died, eventually left Novaville, or still remain is unknown, and frankly, the city doesn't care much about the truth. Novaville was a costly project, and remains on city records, but the tenants and buyers within it are simply classed as defaulting on mortgages, rental payments, and taxes. Due to the bureaucratic nightmare of handling all these

issues, the city stopped maintaining roads, power, and water leading into Novaville.

No fences were erected or roadblocks put in place. The road bridge to Novaville remained in place. Just, nobody travelled there. Everyone could sense there was something *off* about Novaville, and knew to never turn their car on to the bridge. Even criminals avoided the place. Empty as it was, there

was nothing to steal and no addicts to buy the drugs they were peddling.

But what of the Monarch Apartment Complex? As Novaville collapsed around it, the high-rise blithely continued on with life. For some reason, despite the chaos surrounding it, no attacks were launched at the building, leaving it an immaculate pillar in a block of hell. Self-contained, housing all amenities a person might want for a satisfied life, the Monarch residents could look down from their balconies and watch the street fights while sipping cocktails and eating canapés. By virtue of their physically high station, the residents – materially no richer than those living in the buildings surrounding them – could look down upon the conflict at street level and ascend to an upper class. Monarch himself shut himself away in his penthouse and only reappeared months later.





Of course, no party lasts forever. As Novaville died, the Monarch Apartment Complex was all that was left. Food began to run out. Nobody came to clean the pool. The building's generator broke intermittently, and nobody knew how to fix it. Water stopped running. The Monarch residents attempted to leave the building on raids and scouting missions, but each time, the surviving Novaville denizens met them with brutal violence. There was no escape. They ate the dogs and started drinking alcohol more than water. Then they turned on each other. Monarch's inhabitants fought their booze-fuelled, punctual, fierce war every night. They slept off their hangovers during the day. With even the luxury apartments reduced to dilapidation, everyone within Novaville suffered insanity to some degree or other, nobody can recount how the upper levels of the high-rise entered Inferno. In truth, Monarch himself was a cultist of Thaumiel in communion with the Death Angel, who sacrificed Novaville in a calculated bid for power, escaping the district's residents. The configuration of Novaville formed a mass psychic event, with Monarch at its centre. The madness cult consumed the remaining survivors. These days, anyone living in Novaville is a cultist, and anyone within the Monarch Apartment Complex is touched, both physically and mentally, by Inferno. Mr. Monarch and his high priests live in the penthouse, their every need catered by the anarchic masses beneath them.

Now, the cult has decided to spread its reach beyond Novaville's confines. Inferno is chaos, and chaos cannot be caged. The Novaville savages drive to the city's main body and kidnap families, steal provisions, and lure the sane to follow them back to their home territory. Once someone enters Novaville, they always have the option to flee. As soon as someone enters the Monarch Complex, they remain forever Inferno-tainted. All lures go back to the Monarch, in sacrifice to Thaumiel and as a means of infecting more mortals with the cult's unique band of madness.

The cultists brutally murder the unworthy. Any group capable of reaching the summit penthouse is revered, rewarded with their prey to keep or kill, and sent home with blessings. The house, apartment block, or hotel in which they live soon succumbs to the same spiralling madness that originally emanated from the Monarch Complex.

All of the above can be revealed throughout the scenario, if the characters choose to ask Novaville's residents, perform investigations, or piece together clues surrounding the infernal city district.

## THREAT ESCALATION

The threat escalates in *The Summit* from the moment the characters enter Novaville. Immediately, the surviving district residents take notice of the interlopers. Faces appear at windows, figures scurry between alleys spreading word of the cityfolk making their way into Novaville, and sporadic attacks and holdups occur.

While the majority of Novaville residents are hostile, it is important to remember they are each insane. Insanity drives Novaville's inhabitants to unpredictable behaviour, so some of the Novaville savages may appear calm, friendly, or even desperate to assist the PCs. Each carries the taint of Inferno however, and extended time in any individual's company ultimately leads to a crime of some kind, whether it's as simple as the denizen stealing a character's wallet, or as convoluted as poisoning a couple of bottles of beer and leaving them farther up the road for the PCs to discover.

As the scenario proceeds, the Novaville residents subconsciously work together to drive the group towards the Monarch Apartment Complex. The tower block is illuminated on select floors, but otherwise only stands out due to its height and blends in to the general malaise of the area. The PCs will encounter at least three scenes outside Monarch before the cult drives them towards the Inferno gateway.

Once inside the Monarch Apartment Complex, escape nears impossibility. All of Novaville's residents gather outside the high-rise, circling the building and engaging in violent orgies as the characters ascend in search of their McGuffin. The building interior poses a host of escalating threats, requiring each character make physical sacrifices before ascending. Spiritual sacrifices are savoured too, but these do not come until the characters pass into Inferno at the 24th Floor.



### Escalation Steps

**Step One:** The scenario commences with combat between the characters and Novaville savages. The savages' intent is to lure a group into Novaville. They do not attack to kill as much as humiliate and cause pain. Their objective is to capture something so important, the group will have no choice but to follow them to Novaville, where the cultists aim to lose them in the labyrinthine alley. The opening scene, *Ambush*, frames Step One.

**Step Two:** Arriving in Novaville, the threat escalates through paranoia and isolation. Though the city is visible from within Novaville, lights twinkling in the dark distance, it might as well be the moon. Nothing that occurs in Novaville will summon people from outside it. Nobody is willing to make that journey. Mobile phone signals die as the characters cross the bridge, and though the district initially seems empty, movement out of in the PCs'



peripheries, and “coincidental” mishaps such as a car tire bursting, a ball bouncing into the road, and light flashes in windows up ahead causes unease for the characters. The first scene they will likely encounter once in Novaville will either be *Breakdown* or *Casualty*, either of which should up the ante.

**Step Three:** Plunging deeper into Novaville, the savages no longer pull their punches, as the test begins to see whether the interlopers deserve the glory of Inferno and the Lore of Madness. If the characters remain in their vehicle, it receives attacks from above and at street level during *Besieged*, forcing them into the outside world. Supposedly sane residents offer the group brief respite in *Sanctuary*, until it transpires even they harbour malevolent intent. *Advice* presents a scene where the cultists highlight the group's destination. *Conjuring* presents the first view into the other worlds, as the PCs discover a macabre scene of sacrifice, the cultists summoning a Creature of Madness into Novaville.

**Step Four:** The Monarch Apartment Complex presents a sandbox of a different style, as ascent is the only option, but the floors the party visits are up to them. Each presents an escalating vista of horror and increasingly dire experiences. No party can survive a stop off at each of the thirty floors. In *Orgy* the cult beyond the high-rise copulate in fierce revelry, preventing escape. Within the tower block, threats keep the party on the move, while static opportunities for sacrifice gift the characters an awakening, at the cost of their physical completeness.

**Step Five:** The 24th Floor of the Monarch Apartment Complex is in a better state than any below. Despite appearances, the 24th is the opening to Inferno. It acts as a threshold, beyond which the following floors leading up to the penthouse present Inferno's true servants. On these floors, cultists attempt to snatch characters for ritual sacrifice, and the party receives the invitation to participate in the cult's hellish activities. The cultists on these levels freely practice the Lore of Madness, and steadily drive the characters into Inferno's waiting arms in *Becoming*. If they withstand them and retrieve their McGuffin, the players may feel their characters will be allowed free. Inferno is not an ordered plane in which the denizens follow the rules of good conduct, however. If the characters overpower or resist the cultists, they will be harried all the way from Novaville, likely dying during the escape attempt. A great chase ensues; the conclusion of which is open to the GM.

## CENTRAL SCENES

### Ambush

*The evening is cold, the rain heavy and relentless. Worse than the weather in this uncaring city are the thugs facing you right now. They seemed to appear from nowhere, each of them resembling vagrants covered in sores, stinking like something unwashed for years. Their introduction came as the one with the thickest beard struck your left leg with an iron pipe, and the fallow woman held a wrench across your throat. Before you could react, they were already grabbing your [McGuffin]. Half a dozen of these bastards, depraved looks in their eyes, made all the more horrifying by the rainfall they ignore as it runs down their faces.*

*The man with scars all over his cheeks and forehead beckons you to try him as his short companion bustles your [McGuffin] into their van.*

The scenario commences as per the descriptive scene, altered accordingly to match the group's nature and reason for being in their location. At this time the cultists confronting them attempt to humiliate and hurt the group, their chief intent being to steal something valuable from the group – whether a person, something of material worth, or simple pride – and lead the party back to Novaville like lambs to a slaughter.

The cultists do not fear firearms or lethality from the characters, despite only being armed with blunt objects and switchblades. If anything, the PCs' willingness to use deadly force may speak to why the cult is targeting them. If a cultist is killed during the fight, their companions abandon the deceased. Covering up the killing is a problem for the PCs.

The GM should emphasise the attackers' sickly appearances, and their surprising strength despite this. Their eye sockets are deep recesses, their faces mottled, and their hair and beards tangled and thick with mould. Their clothes barely hang together, bound at the seams with brown masking tape and silver duct tape. The GM should also focus on the somehow dizzying smells and sounds emerging from the grunting cultists. The sensory manipulations the cultists practice are a simple magic, though they make the PCs' hearts beat faster, mouths go dry, and adrenaline pump.

The characters stand a good chance of incapacitating at least one of the cultists, though their nature will not be clear at this time. The other cultists speed off in their stolen van. Respond with the following to these potential character choices:

- ◆ **“We don't really care about being attacked...”** – Emphatically state the importance of what the savages stole. If the players don't take the hint, the savages' van actually breaks down within the characters' sight, forcing the cultists to hijack passing vehicles with their quarry. Whatever it takes to keep the PCs on their tail.
- ◆ **“Let's call the cops!”** – The operator encourages the character to trail the attackers until the police arrive, due to their response being stretched by the rash of crime throughout the city. The cultists cross the old bridge into Novaville, where the signal dies. If the PCs advise the operator that their attackers have headed in that direction, there is silence before the operator calmly informs them that the police cannot operate in Novaville at this time, and complaints should be directed at the city council. The cops are not coming.
- ◆ **“Interrogate that bastard who attacked us.”** – The cultist's eyes roll wildly in his head as if loose in their sockets. Soon, he fixes on the group and starts a backing laugh. He explains their attackers are headed to Novaville, and the McGuffin will never be seen again. In the case that the characters' pride was the victim, the cultist makes a more cutting threat, explaining that no one dares entering Novaville, and due to the PCs' cowardice, they won't either. His insulting words should compel the characters to journey to Novaville.
- ◆ **“Let's enlist the boss/our friends/stop for a chat.”** – It is incumbent on the GM to emphasise the short time frame the characters have before they lose their quarry. If they're criminals, the boss tells them they're dead if they don't return what's his. Friends and family act with incredulity if asked for assistance, but promise to get there as soon as they can. This puts their lives at risk in *Backup* below.



Ultimately, the characters must identify the gang heads into Novaville. If the players have not already been made aware of the failed district, now would be a good time for the GM to introduce them to some of the tales surrounding the city's embarrassing secret.

## Bridge

*You know where this bridge leads, though it's not a part of the city you've visited before. Nobody goes to Novaville. The place is a dump. Even the criminals avoid it. There's nothing to steal, nobody to shake down, and no house habitable enough to appeal even to the lowest vagrant. Everyone affords Novaville a wide berth. The news reported disturbing geological trends beneath the area some years back, with ten buildings collapsing before recovery teams could stabilise them. There were also reports of gas leaks, contaminated water, and flash floods hitting buildings near the river. In short, the area was abandoned and nobody saw fit to reclaim it in these times of economic hardship. The van you were pursuing disappears over the obstruction-littered bridge and into the district-that-never-was, beckoning you to enter a ghost town within eyeshot of civilisation.*

This scene is the calm before the storm. If the characters are driving, they must navigate roadblocks, barriers, and holes in the tarmac on their way into Novaville. With every swerve, it's as if the distance between here and home grows by a mile. There are no gaping cavities waiting to pull the characters' vehicle into the river, though it's possible they may get stuck on a toppled traffic obstacle or collapsed piece of fencing. Most of this equipment is nearly a decade old, though parts could be salvaged to make rusty, jagged weapons, if the PCs are that way inclined.

Describe the approach of shadowy Novaville in the near distance, and the fade of lights behind the group. Their journey across the bridge sees their mobile signals drop and then disappear, along with the sound of traffic, and all signs of life. They are entering the unknown.

## Novaville

*Novaville. Despite the name, the new town is hardly the size of a village, barely a kilometre square. The ground in Novaville rises and dips unnaturally, as if the earth itself tried to shake the buildings off their foundations. The buildings themselves show the signs of dilapidation common to the abandoned sections of any urban jungle, though their degradation appears premature. Novaville was only evacuated within the last ten years, you're sure, but this place looks like it was bombed in the Blitz and abandoned to the elements for half a century. Once-rich structures hang tragically limp over roads and pavements, walls collapsed to the ground, rooves caved in, and windows smashed. You spy the spire of a church, the bells in which will never again toll. You pass a theatre, the doors to which are collapsed to the ground, papers, stalls, and seats discarded out into the road as if a great explosion blew the building inside out. A police precinct stands mostly intact, though no lights emanate from within. This place is a ghost town. The only signs of life come from the disappearing tail-lights of the van you pursued here.*

Novaville should appear to the characters like a ghost town, though it's anything but. Novaville crawls with a cruel form of life. The savages who dwell here were once normal men, women, and children, who now exist in a twisted simulacrum of life. Some inhabitants know they serve Inferno and the roiling gate within the Monarch Apartment Complex, but most remain ignorant. They are insane because they are. Their mentality does not provide room for the possibility that there may be any other form of living.

As the PCs pass through Novaville, describe the flirting movement between buildings, the weird undulation of the ground, the occasional flash of light from building windows on opposite sides of the streets. The dense rainfall makes everything difficult to discern with accuracy. The characters may well interpret the flashes as signals between Novaville's inhabitants. Attempts to intercept the runners or confront the observers should not fail, but will be difficult. The Novaville inhabitants wish to avoid notice at this time. Any seized by the PCs will describe how Novaville is a utopia, where everyone knows their place. They deny all knowledge of the cultist attackers unless coerced, in which case they will point towards the Monarch Apartment Complex as the likely destination. They will also advise that entry is impossible until the cult allows it.

This scene provides the players an opportunity to explore a district torn apart by violence. It is a sandbox, but the GM should keep them focused on their reasons for coming here. The cultists pursued by the characters dump the van and split up across Novaville. This allows the introduction of various horrifying locations throughout Novaville, free for the GM to describe and fill with encounters. Note that as this is an early section of the scenario, the group should not yet be attacked at full-force or encounter anything outwardly supernatural.

- ◆ **The Queen Mary Theatre** – Novaville's theatre has been entirely emptied of seats, stands, and props, all of which are dumped outside in front. This detritus forms a thick arch surrounding its blasted open doors. The clear auditorium is a depressed pit, the stage caved in. Thick blood has pooled and congealed within the pit's centre. From the milky froth atop, it would appear some of the blood is fresh, though the stains surrounding the middle are old. Flies and maggots are thick here.
- ◆ **The Mulri-Storey Carpark** – The six-storey carpark was supposed to service any visitors attending Nova Mall, but has now been repurposed as a meat factory. The meat is that of humans. Bodies are hung on long chain hooks on each storey, the different age groups hung on different floors. The bodies are air-dried. Being subjected to the elements leaves the carcasses rotten and in pieces, but Novaville savages don't seem to mind. Various butchers stalk the floors, testing the meat and engaging in conversation with any still-breathing bodies. The PCs may decide to unhook a carcass, only for it to react angrily. In their madness, these people choose to be eaten.
- ◆ **The Nova Mall** – Nova Mall was supposed to be an experimental structure of glass, iridescent bulbs, and automated servers. It collapsed as quickly as everything else in Novaville, though in certain parts of the glass worm (as the Novaville residents now call it), shrines dedicated to whirring robotic waiters and appliances still exist. The faithful scour Novaville for batteries to keep their gods alive, and believe the automatons tell them to steal, kill, and fornicate for their pleasure. The faithful are incredibly territorial,



but may

assist the characters. They hold the Monarch Complex in low regard. The Nova Mall actually acts as a small portal into Metropolis, but not enough of one to affect the greater part of Novaville.

- ◆ **The Police Precinct** – Station 19 is an oddity in Novaville, as the building stands mostly intact, and has not been entirely gutted. A Novaville savage mans the front desk clad in the scraps of a police officer's uniform, and holds up anyone who attempts to gain entry. This maniac – Gil Bronson – was once a cop in Novaville, who refused to leave when the rest of the police were pulled out. He still holds the key to the arms locker, and defends the Precinct like his own private castle. He's somewhat saner than his peers, but is bigoted, violent, and does not believe in innocence. He automatically suspects characters of any minority background as an undesirable element, and will shoot first if he detects any suspicious movement from such individuals.
- ◆ **St. Peter's** – Novaville's church was assigned a priest, but never received a congregation. None of the district's inhabitants exhibited a single bone of religion, until Inferno exerted its influence. Father DiMartino fully embraced worship of the Lore of Madness, and regularly sends tithes and reports back to his superiors regarding the city's strong faith, along with bags of scrap. The Church is very concerned about DiMartino, but has yet to send a representative to investigate. Father DiMartino leads the Novaville savages' belief, though he's never stepped inside the Monarch Apartment Complex. He never sleeps, and performs constant baptisms of his congregation. DiMartino's baptisms consist of forcing savages' faces into liquid faeces until they start to drown, before pulling their heads up by the hair and making them drink from a chalice filled with polluted water. He earnestly believes human effluence is purified, his insanity manifesting as a copromania. He will eagerly attempt to give the same benediction to seized characters.
- ◆ **WyrldWood Restaurant** – Once a large family restaurant, the WyrldWood is now a place for savages to communally gather and eat whatever pooled foodstuffs they've been able to procure. It also doubles as a primitive gladiatorial arena, as the alphas fight for choice scraps, generally leaving nothing for their peers. Feeding time takes place throughout day and night. Alphas don't tend to remain alphas for long if they stay in the WyrldWood, as the families cheated out of food gang up on their stronger cousins and devour them. If the PCs come here, they'll be expected to donate food or become nourishment for the savages in attendance.
- ◆ **The Ding-Dong Inn** – A value hotel, now used for birthing, child rearing, and procreation, all under one revolting roof. The building steadily rots from damp rising through its foundations. The stench of afterbirth is thick here, and when mixed with the cloying mould from the walls, contributes to nausea for anyone not used to the odour. The mothers and midwives in the Ding-Dong act friendly towards visitors, as they're always on the lookout for more doctors. Failing that, they're always on the lookout for clothes for their patients, inventory to barter with the alphas, and meat to trade

with the

butchers. The children in the Ding-Dong are violent creatures. Not used to concealing their aggressiveness, and fully affected by the Inferno gateway, they lash out at any intruders with nails, teeth, and whatever rudimentary weapons they can get their hands on.

The PCs can visit many locations around Novaville. The overriding sense should be that this district has fallen to barbarism, though the reasons for doing so should not be clear. Residents can be charming, in the main, though they harbour psychotic intentions. If the PCs decide to visit multiple locations – and may do so, as the cultists they're tracking split up across Novaville – it should take at least three stops to discover the Monarch Apartment Complex is the district's chaos nexus.

## Distance

*It's only now that you notice the distance between your present location and the part of the city from which you travelled to Novaville. It seems farther away than it should. The lights from skyscrapers and offices still twinkle in the dark of night, but they seem dimmer and more intermittent than they should. The longer you stare, the farther away they appear to move, even though you are motionless. You almost feel like paying attention to your origins will make it more difficult to return.*

A small scene to be placed at any appropriate point in Novaville sets the players up with the reality that the entire district is succumbing steadily to Inferno. Though the high-rise is Inferno's focus, the area draws all inhabitants into the plane whether they're aware of it or not.

Any attempts from characters to flee at this point should seem unusually hindered, at first by distance, and then by labyrinthine streets, obstacles in the road, roads leading to turns that are suddenly blocked off by a building that wasn't there before, and ultimately, a lack of access to the bridge.

If fleeing is truly what the players want for their characters, they can do so, though this should be at great physical and spiritual cost, as Novaville's inhabitants attempt to lynch the cowards and they lose whatever was taken from them.

## Breakdown

*Bang! You were attempting to be careful, but something springs into view out of the rain and pierces both front tires. Worse, whatever it is has lodged in the wheels, preventing your forward progress in this vehicle.*

The Novaville savages lay traps across the roads throughout their small district. Stringers, potholes contained spikes, small explosives, and trenches are commonplace. If the characters are careless, they run into one of these hazards, though they should have the opportunity to avoid it.

The aftermath of the vehicle breaking down is either a gang of savages approaches the vehicle with hostile intentions, forcing the characters to fight or flee (perhaps to one of the locations named in the *Novaville* scene). If the GM prefers, a savage might approach with offer of assistance, which would take the group to *Sanctuary*.



## Casualty

*You are being so careful driving, moving slowly despite what's at stake, not trusting the road or the rain. The one thing you can't control is the human element. From the corner of your eye you see a blur of motion, and SLAM, the front of your vehicle collides with someone attempting to run across the road.*

The person who threw herself in front of the car is a distraction. She sacrifices herself – breaking her hip – so a gang of her friends can reach the stopped car and gut it of its worth. The savages do not stop to chat with or harass the characters, swiftly going to work on stripping the vehicle down completely. They split up throughout Novaville with their prizes, and do not attempt to claim the casualty in the road.

If the PCs attempt to nurse the woman, they find her name is Edie. She's as addled as the other Novaville inhabitants, but will tell the characters where to find safety when the hungry ones come calling. She suggests the Nova Mall if the characters carry any electronic devices, which they can offer to the automotive gods as tribute, or the Police Precinct, if the group promises to behave.

## Besieged

*For a time, it seems remaining in the vehicle is the safest option. You stay dry, and out of reach the bizarre residents of a place you thought abandoned. It's only now you peer through the torrential rain and see the crowd pouring down the road and out of alleys towards your car, holding picks, planks, hammers, pieces of rock, and lumps of metal. They skulk towards your vehicle like curious creatures at a zoo, but it's clear what they intend to do to you if they catch you.*

The characters are on the run again. This should be the first time the Novaville inhabitants' overwhelming madness and aggression should become clear to the players. This many *cultists* in close proximity seems to make the rain warp into spirals, the ground shudder, and lights blink weird colours throughout the sky. The Lore of Madness affects the characters, potentially bewildering them for long enough so the pack can approach.

The PCs can attempt to fight off the cultists, but they are far too many. Their insanity prevents cowardice. None of the savages will flee just because the man beside them has fallen. However, a cultist may retreat if a friend falls and she can procure something from his body. Characters may play to the capricious attitudes these servants of Inferno display.

If the characters are foolish enough to stand their ground unarmed, the cultists do not feel them worthy of the Monarch Apartment Complex. They will instead take the group the Multi-Storey Carpark for hanging, or the Queen Mary Theatre for ritual sacrifice as the audience watches.

## Sanctuary

*Every one of the Novaville inhabitants has appeared mentally unhinged, except for this figure in a window hastily beckoning you towards her building before ducking beneath her window frame in case someone sees. The small apartment building looks to have been fire gutted some time ago. The ash still sticks to the walls, despite the incessant rain. The woman – a thin, pasty individual with clumps missing from her hair – ushers you into her flat before closing the door. "Thank God," she says, as she hangs a heavy cloth over the broken window. "You're the first sane people I've seen in years."*

Pam is one of many spiders in Novaville. The spiders lure prey into their web, and feed on them at leisure, spiritually as well as physically. Despite her ill appearance, she betrays none of the tell-tale signs of mental imbalance so prevalent in Novaville. In fact, she appears reassuringly panicked and upset by her situation. This is all a lie to get her guests to let their guard down.

Pam assures the group that once night passes, she will assist them in looking for whatever it is they lost. She promises that no crimes take place in Novaville at night, and that they should spend the time resting. She shows them her bedroom – a strangely comfortable room, despite the silverfish skittering about and damp cushions – and suggests they get some sleep.

She attempts to feed them cups of tea from a pot she boils over a fire made from burning carpet remnants. The tea is poisoned with a heavy sedative. If the characters take her up on her kind offer, one of them wakes to find her cutting off the lower half of his numb leg, the blood gushing out despite the rubber hoses she uses for binding. He is unable to scream at first, and can only moan mildly. If he attempts to make too much noise, she positions a knife over the neck of another PC, and gives the choice of continuing to emit noise or losing a friend.

If the characters are aggressive with Pam, she plays the role of victim, offering anything in her power to give. The one thing she won't do is name the Monarch Apartment Complex. That is, unless a male is prepared to give her a child. Like many spiders, Pam wants nothing more than to spawn, and the arrival of healthy males sets off her maternal instinct for the first time in years.

## Advice

*The savage, who until now has given an air of psychopathic aggression, calms and grins at you. He has no teeth. "You've done well to survive, you know? If you want your quarry, you'll find it in the Monarch Apartment Complex penthouse. Getting to the top will require much sacrifice. More than you'll be prepared to give."*

At a critical point, the characters discover the Monarch Apartment Complex is their fated destination. If they approach the Complex at a premature point in the scenario, the number of *cultists* surrounding it make access near-impossible, unless the PCs are prepared to dress as the savages. Even then, they need to act with lethal aggression to blend in completely. No savages push past one another without lashing out with a knife or pipe.

The cultist who conveys Monarch's location abruptly screams and burns in a pyre of black flames originating in his stomach. The Death Angel Thaumiel wants the characters, but has no time for treacherous cultists. His cabal of high priests, who dwell throughout the apartment complex, mete out punishment to other cultists who fail the being's wishes.



## Conjuring

You see the Monarch Apartment Complex clearly for the first time, as the rain briefly abates. Lights dot the 30-storey high building, which appears to lean precariously towards you. It takes you some time to realise the building curves forwards like a bent finger, though it resembles more the brutalist architecture of the 1970s than anything modernist. At one point, this complex might have been an innovation in building. Now it's as ruined as any other part of this district, though it's difficult to ascertain the full damage on a building so tall. Just staring gives you vertigo, and you struggle to keep your footing. It's as if the buildings surrounding the Monarch contort and writhe, and the savages on the street flit in and out of view, as if existing one moment, and not the next.

A gathering of these Novaville denizens appears to be clad in veils of different colours. They burn red incense and carry candles of different colours, burning despite the rain. The group members walk in a circle and howl intermittently as they jerk and twitch violently. A formless lump of clay between them starts to grow and writhe into existence, eyes and lips opening along the length of its tall, broad body; phalluses dangling from mouths before being slurped up and replaced with fingers attempting to pry from every suckering orifice. This creature of madness roils from within the summoning circle in your general direction.

The characters' first view of the Monarch Apartment Complex may also be their first introduction to magic, as the Inferno *cultists* summon a *Creature of Madness*. While they do this to stop the characters, this is a regular habit of Novaville's residents. The Death Angel Thaumiel wants Novaville to descend into the kind of bedlam he prefers to rule. Creatures of Madness roll around the district constantly, driving the more lucid residents into greater depths of insanity. The Creature of Madness will attempt to drive the characters into fits of insanity, and unless suitably distracted by bright lights, riddles, or singing, it will attempt to devour anyone who resists.

If the PCs approach the building before the summoning (it's a seven-hour ritual started earlier that day), the great number of cultists surrounding the Monarch act with hostility against the perceived ritual disruptors. They approach with bared fists and light clubs, wielding daggers and sharpened pieces of scrap metal.

Once the Creature of Madness departs, or is destroyed, the cultists part to allow the characters entry to the building foyer.

## Orgy

As the last of you steps over the threshold into this pulsating edifice of a building, you catch movement out the corner of your eye. The cultists beyond the front doors are disrobing. Dozens appear, and then dozens more, all converging on the building. None enter or pay you any notice. Instead, they aggressively handle one another and commence a brutal orgy, routinely swapping partners and breaking into fights until arousal sets in again.

If the PCs attempt to leave the building, the cultists try to ensnare them in the orgy. Ultimately, this will not go well for them. If they decide to play along, they find physical engagement with the cultists spreads the district's madness like a disease. Any characters foolish enough to travel this path become psychotic.

## Monarch

The high-rise stretches dizzily above you. Despite years of decay, the spiral stair leading to the top floor stands intact, and the lights above the lifts intermittently flicker to and from life. Standing this low down feels oppressive, and claustrophobic. You are aware of the sheer weight of concrete, glass, and metal above you, and how one seismic shift could result in your absolute destruction. It becomes difficult to breathe, and you force yourself to stare at the floor. Looking up in this place seems to contribute to the madness.

The floor plan ahead of you details the once-opulent building, bedecked with nearly 1,000 apartments, leisure facilities, and an entire floor dedicated to a swimming pool, bank, shops, and hairdressers – even a driving range. If you lived somewhere like this, there would hardly be a reason to leave. A low thrum throughout the building breaks your wonderment and brings you to your knees. This entire structure induces nausea.

The Monarch Apartment Complex houses the best of Novaville, both in terms of preserved architecture and facilities, and the most lucid denizens. Lucidity does not imply rationality, however. The *cultists* who dwell in the Monarch are those who have visited Inferno, encountered an aspect of Thaumiel, and returned; now possessed by malevolent creatures or merely enlightened as to the Death Angel's existence. These lucid psychopaths wish to spread their madness across the city via capable vessels, and act as high priests. Monarch demands it. As Novaville embraces misrule, Monarch finds it easy to exert power in the name of Thaumiel. Few can reach the penthouse and true enlightenment, however.

The many floors of the building can be accessed from the stairs and the lifts. The lifts are unreliable, and will only transport individuals to the penthouse once each traveller has sacrificed something to the building. A sacrifice in wider Novaville does not count – the loss must occur within the Monarch itself. Therefore, the stairs are the less costly route on the face of it, but each floor poses dangers. Murderous cultists, packs of serial killers, warped machines, Creatures of Madness, environmental horrors, and traps designed to cause as much pain as a human might endure dot the floors.

The ascent to the summit is extremely arduous, and characters may die en route. However, if all the PCs die, they will find themselves back in the lobby. Now, however, they are trapped in Inferno. The Monarch Complex exists outside Time and Space, a black void outside leading to nothing and no one. The characters may reemerge alive, into reality, but must make the Sisyphean journey again and again to do so.

For those attempting the ascent, the following list chronicles the potential encounters on each of the twenty-nine floors prior to the penthouse. Not all need be experienced, but any the GM wishes to use should be embellished as appropriate:

- [1] On the 1st floor, *cultists* in cages too small for their bodies beg for release. Their *jailer*, a man in a full rubber suit, will release a cultist if one of the characters agrees to get in a cage with him for one hour, and become subject to his unusual pleasures.



## Monarch Apartment Complex

Penthouse

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Ground Floor

Basement

[2] The 2nd floor stinks of sex. The walls to each apartment have holes knocked into them, through which protrude human orifices and sexual organs. Stepping around to the other side of one such wall will reveal no body on the other side. The orifices and protuberances pulsate rhythmically, oozing lubricant and beckoning to the PCs.

[3] The 3rd floor is freezing cold, to the point that traversing it is enough to give a character frostbite on her exposed digits unless they remain covered. The freezers from every other floor have been gutted, their interiors lining the walls, floor and ceiling of this level, keeping piles of human heads frozen for some unknown purpose.

[4] The 4th floor is home to an *insane killer*, of the type summoned using the spell of the same name. No cultists travel to the 4th floor, as the insane killer picks up the scent of his prey and pursues them relentlessly. The insane killer cannot be stopped, only slowed.

[5] The 5th floor was once lined with squash and tennis courts. *Cultists* now use this area for interrogations, keeping suspects in the glass-walled courts while steadily turning up temperature to bake the incarcerated. The torturers offer the treatment to the characters, and promise that if they are entirely truthful, they may pass without incident.

[6] The 6th floor carpets are soaked in rancid water that's been running for years, but never at sufficient volume to make the floor collapse. Rather, it pours through holes in the wall and out the building's wall. *Cultists* sleep beneath the wet carpets, and grab the ankles of intruders, attempting to drown them in the festering rugs. A minute inhaling the water from the carpets removes a character's memories of childhood. Two minutes removes all memories of her teenage years, and so on.

[7] The 7th floor is a sadomasochistic haven, as the former residents here voluntarily vivisected themselves for pleasure. Some survived their grisly operations, and offer the PCs similar procedures, explaining that with an



- open abdomen, forearm, or inner thigh, they may pass by freely.
- [8] The 8th floor is now a crèche for the cultists' favoured children, who all sit attentively, watching the *cultists* perform a puppet show using deceased children no longer favored by the cult. Transit requires the characters assume the role of puppet masters, and tell an amusing stories with the rotting bodies.
- [9] The 9th floor appears normal at first appearance, dotted with immaculate seeming apartments, until *Creatures of Madness* burst from the doors and harass the PCs around the building with threats of madness or consumption.
- [10] The supermarket on the 10th floor is home to empty shelves and several tins of dog food that the building's resident opted not to eat, choosing to eat their dogs instead. The 10th floor houses several checkout staff, despite the lack of stock. Each poses riddles to anyone who wishes to pass by the floor. This trick would be easily overcome, except each checkout assistant speaks a gibberish language roughly comparable to Latin. If any characters understand the languages, they might solve the riddle. If they fail, the checkout assistants rise from their stations armed with carving knives and tin openers, intent on opening up the PCs.
- [11] The 11th floor is bedecked in occult paraphernalia. Incense burns, the acrid scent of charred skin fills the floor, and a *cultist* resembling a New Age guru dances through apartments, constantly appearing in the group's periphery. As the characters attempt to make their way across the floor, his booming voice makes an offer: If one of them is prepared to burn the flesh from their hands, they shall be allowed to pass safely.
- [12] The 12th floor has been converted to a labyrinth of narrow, unlit corridors, lined with exposed razor blades. Before entering the maze, a crude sign advertises that the character who attaches a part of his intestines to a hook below the sign and leads his party through will ensure his companions come to no harm.
- [13] The 13th floor was once the building's bank. A single *cultist*, still dressed formally despite her surroundings, asks the characters if they would make a deposit. Specifically, she requires a pound of flesh from at least one character. If they refuse, she deigns them overdrawn, and incants a spell that causes rapid flesh mutation and multiplication on her target, before disappearing. The vaults then empty a shower of fetid flesh.
- [14] The 14th floor apartments are dizzying and hypnotic. The peeling wallpaper scrawled with sigils and pentagrams causes any PCs attempting to make their way through to relive their worst nightmares, before taking them to empty windows on the same floor. It takes all the willpower they have to not jump.
- [15] The 15th floor is dominated by a swimming pool crawling with frothy pollution. The water is a foul brown-grey colour, and unidentifiable chunks of meat bob on its surface. The floor has subsided, and the only way beyond the 15th floor is by wading or swimming through the water. Doing so painfully melts clothes onto skin; however, if the swim is performed nude, no ill effects occur.
- [16] The 16th floor flashes with strobe lights, as if the apartments were locked in some kind of rave. No music plays except for a rising and sinking hum of sickening monotone. The longer the PCs remain on this vacant floor, the worse their eyesight becomes. This floor is treacherous to navigate, as doors are papered over. The way out will only reveal itself after one of the characters loses sight in both eyes.
- [17] The 17th floor looks like an after-party just took place. Coffee tables covered in wine bottles, ashtrays filled with cigarettes, and small trays with lines of cocaine on them dot the entire floor, as 1970s music plays on a vintage record player. Any characters who interact with the artefacts on this floor gains forty years in age.
- [18] As the doors open onto the 18th floor, the groans and grunts of sex fill the air, along the intoxicating odour of cheap perfume. Bodies rut on the floor from wall to wall, forcing the characters to climb over them or through them. The *cultists* indulging in this revelry wish to spread their activities to any intruders. At least one PC must submit to a sexual act if the rest are to pass unmolested.
- [19] The former restaurant floor, the 19th floor remains weirdly intact. *Cultists* dine richly on unidentifiable meals. They do not accost travellers, strangely, but do toast them. If the PCs engage with any of the normal-seeming diners, they find the restaurant serving dried or marinated long pig organs (depending on preference.) Engaging with any of the diners is accepting an invitation to eat, and refusal results in the characters being hunted throughout the building by outraged cultists.
- [20] The 20th floor once housed leisure facilities, but is now dedicated to memories. The cultists have pinned up old photos of their families in the squash courts and gymnasium, along with clippings from magazines. A dizzying mist floats throughout this floor. When the PCs make contact with it, countless internal voices tell the characters that if they put a photo on the wall, they may pass. Doing so completely removes the photographed people from reality, along with memory of them.
- [21] The luxurious 21st floor is now used as a garbage pile for all the building's refuse. The wide staircase landing and elevator shaft invite those from upper floors to just throw their rubbish down. If the PCs attempt to navigate the trash, they find the refuse withers and putrefies anything touching it for more than a few minutes. The only safe away around the trash heap is via the balcony, which stretches around the entire floor. The balcony is very precarious now, however, and the building's madness compels those walking the outside to step into the air.
- [22] The 22nd floor houses several discarded battery packs, while sparks spit from broken devices latched to the walls. A slowed down voice speaks on repeat, stating "the gods beyond require a sacrifice from your number; name your sacrifice." The PCs may proceed without naming anyone, but if they do, the namer is ensnared by a sudden flurry of electrical cables and burned to a crisp. Thaumiel enjoys sinners.



[23] The 23rd floor buzzes with bugs, as the building's drainage long ago backed up and evacuated here, coating the walls and floor. Bodies remain stuck, drowned in coagulated raw sewage. Trudging through the filth opens up sores on the travellers' skin, infecting them rapidly. While the PCs may not discover their diseases until days later; they are infected with viruses and bacteria both mundane and supernatural, which take a toll on both their physical and spiritual wellbeing.

[24] The 24th floor looks out of place in this building, as all working equipment from other apartments has been stacked here in ordered piles, making a floor filled with ritually erected pillars of toasters, televisions, games consoles, and microwaves. This floor conveys no ill treatment and demands no sacrifice. It is just an oddity.

[25] The 25th floor has recently been refurbished. Somehow, a new carpet has been laid down. The carpet covers around a dozen gaping holes, except those pits do not lead to the relatively safe 24th floor. Anyone unlucky enough to fall into a hole is wreathed in carpet and transported directly into the writhing maw of a massive Creature of Madness (*The Thing Beneath the Floor*) infesting the entire floor.

[26] From the 26th floor up, a bitter smell of blood, dried waste, and sulphur fills the air. The level is the communal living area for all "enlightened" *cultists*. Many sleep here, and if awoken, attempt to seize the PCs for participation in a sacrificial ritual. The Madness cultists do not seek to slaughter the living, but wish to destroy the sane mind.

[27] The stench on the 27th floor is worse than the preceding floor. The vents belch acrid, toxic fumes, and the *cultists* on this floor all wear makeshift masks. The walls on this level are festooned with maps of the city and the country, with marks notating where the cult has spread. If the cultists on this floor detect the characters don't match their numbers, they will attempt to seize the characters and force their faces to the poisonous, corroding gas emanating from the air ducts.

[28] The gas from the 27th floor dissipates here, and is replaced with the rank stench of death. The air is thick with the sound of incessant buzzing. The characters must wade through clouds of flies and bluebottles, as they step over, on, and through bodies ritually sacrificed on the floor above and dumped here. Chanting can be heard from above.

[29] The bloodletting floor is where aspirant cultists who fail the tests of Madness come to die. The 29th floor houses pedestals in each apartment, where *cultists* are alternately fucked, tortured, or murdered over the plinths, in all manner of angles and methods. Blood fills large bowls at the bottoms of these plinths, from which *Creatures of Madness* lap the spillages. Chanting from above is even louder. Cultists seize any characters spotted here, declaring them failures to the cult. A sacrifice attempt follows.

[30] The penthouse is the home of the building's owners – high priests, Thaumiel's honour guard, adherents to Inferno, and – of course – Monarch himself. They dress in expensive suits, smart dresses, and drink expensive whiskey instead of blood. The characters' quarry is in the roof garden adjacent to the penthouse, overlooking Novaville. Except, Monarch and his party will not allow characters to pass without a test.

## Becoming

*The crystal doors to the penthouse swing open. Before you is the first clean, sweet smelling room you've encountered since arriving in Novaville. This is the most ostentatious luxury suite you've ever seen. The carpet is plush and soft, a chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and a string quartet plays a soft tune, filling the air with beauty. Surrounding the room are art pieces and beautiful humans, posed as if sculptures. Some of the art pieces appear to be originals, liberated from some museum. The walls move like flames, and give off a comfortable warmth absent from the rest of this building.*

*The penthouse cultists look positively urbane compared to what you've just endured. They seem to converse, but in a low warbling moan that could be a form of chant. One – a man in a pinstripe suit – stops his chanting to raise a smoking pipe to his lips, taking a puff before continuing his contribution to the incantation. They each seem so relaxed, sat in their chairs, looking at one another lovingly.*

*Suddenly, the chanting stops. The Pinstripe Man asks you what it is you've endured to come this far into Hell.*

If each of the characters has lost something on the journey to the penthouse, the pinstriped cultist – Monarch – nods and slowly applauds, his peers joining in. He then makes an offer. He can undo all the insanity they've endured, and introduce them to an enlightened form of Madness; the type that the penthouse cultists share right now. What's more, if they accept this gift, Inferno will reverse all **Harm** suffered during the PCs' summit.

Of course, there's a price. If the characters accept the offer after their gruelling ordeal, it's possible the players have forgotten their original reason for climbing the building. The cultists remind them. Whatever they sought will be sacrificed to glorious Inferno, as the characters become Enlightened.

If the characters made their journey to the summit without each enduring a loss, *the Pinstripe Man* flicks his wrist, and they appear on a floor determined by the GM. Should they attempt the same trick again, the cultists reveal their true forms as *razides*, and attempt to throw the characters from the building. Only Monarch does not shift forms. A fall from the summit is the only way to truly die in the Monarch Apartment Complex.

## The Pinstripe Man

*The man in black pinstripe sits languidly in a lounge chair, pipe in one hand, cocktail glass in the other. There's something about him that stands out. Given your recent ordeal, you can assume this little group of seemingly urbane residents are high priests, or devotees on a higher plane than their peers on lower floors. He seems to be something more, however. The Pinstripe Man offers a smile too wide for his face, showing all his teeth as he places his cocktail glass down, and then runs his free hand through his greasy, slicked back hair. "Thaumiel respects power, and you have all come far. You've all seen what true power is. Power is watching everyone around you fall into hell while you sit atop the wreckage. Power is knowing you are better than the rest. You may call me Monarch. I am the architect of this building. Now tell me you want a taste of this wonderful power."*

This optional scene gives more focus to the building's architect, Thaumiel's magician, and the PCs' route to power, should they seek it.



*The Pinstriped Man* is indeed the building's architect, although Monarch is actually a pseudonym. This high priest of Thaumiel is cordial, even when ordering the torture and death of new arrivals. The other high priests place him on a pedestal, as they believe him when he says he has seen Thaumiel and lived to tell everyone about the Death Angel's glory. The power Monarch possesses back up his claims. It is he who ushered the apartment complex into Inferno, and it is he who let the building's corruption seep into the surrounding district.

Monarch will command his fellow high priests to action before using spells to attack anyone approaching him. He is an Enlightened magician. If nearly defeated, Monarch attempts to jump from the building and access Inferno fully. The characters' actions may prevent this. If they are successful, Monarch believes Thaumiel abandoned him and loses all rationality, becoming a crazed priest just like his fellows.

## Endings

The characters' actions lead to multiple possible endings:

### Escape

The characters may turn tail and flee the building without retrieving their McGuffin. This is, in a sense, the easiest route. If they take the lift, they hear the sound of the cable squealing and fraying above them for a few seconds, giving some the chance to jump from the lift before it plunges to the ground floor. This leaves them at the *cultists'* mercies. Should they take the stairs, they must encounter that they met on the way up on the way down. The Pinstripe Man, Monarch, commands every cultist to hunt the group down, until they have entertained Novaville's residents to the best of their ability.

Heroic characters may decide to save their McGuffin before attempting an escape. Such an attempt requires opening the door to the roof garden, which in fact opens a door to Inferno in its rawest state. Bodies burn or languish on spikes as *razides* torture their victims for orgasmic pleasure. Souls swirl in vortices of acid, while chains pull spirits to shreds, reassembling them before pulverising them and starting the process again. At the heart of this realm, within sight of the PCs, is the reason they came here. By taking a step forward into Inferno, they may retrieve their McGuffin.

The first to step forward and grab the McGuffin immediately feels himself falling, as in reality he's stepped over the edge of the building. The other PCs may grab him if they act quickly enough, and still have the limbs and eyesight to do so after their ordeal. If the McGuffin and character is saved, the summit's high priests are furious. Their skins split to reveal the *razides* lurking within, which do everything in their power to prevent the PCs' escape. Only *the Pinstripe Man* does not change, allowing the *razides* to do battle, while he incants spells. Monarch has never been possessed. He's a rare human who witnessed a Death Angel and survived.

If the characters defeat two or more of the *razides*, the others back away. Monarch slowly applauds the group, though when their guards drop he will attempt a destructive spell before disappearing. This is not his only development. The

Monarch Apartment Complex reverts to mundanity, all of its inhabitants disappearing as it becomes merely a dilapidated building. All seems safe for the characters' escape, until they encounter the thriving masses of cultists still at play outside...

### Death

If the characters all die during their attempts to reach the summit, they reappear in the building's lobby. There is no escape from the Monarch this time, as vacuum surrounds it. However, another ascent to the summit bears the same trials and tribulations as before, but with one main difference. Any limbs lost, memories erased, violations endured, or similar wounds inflicted, are still borne by the characters.

Each time they die, they must retry, sacrificing even greater parts of themselves. Through this method, the *razides* on the summit feel confident the characters will agree to join the cult, with all ailments and memories of such removed.

People cannot die in the Monarch Apartment Complex. They can only be reborn over and over, until they become a permanent fixture or fitting in the building.

### The Cult

The characters may opt to join the cult and recover from their grievous losses. Doing so guarantees the sacrifice of their McGuffin, and their infection with the Lore of Madness. The *razides* celebrate the new cultists, and deliver them to the ground floor so the Novaville savages may abase themselves in worship. The PCs are then sent back to the city, from where a new madness will spread.

But this need not be the end of the characters. The personal sacrifice they make can be undone, if they respond to Metropolis' overtures. The *lictors* come calling as the insanity sets in across the city, explaining they're the only ones who can stop the madness by destroying the Monarch Apartment Complex. If they do so, they'll regain all ailments, but the McGuffin will be returned (or a Metropolis version of it, whether person, item, or feeling.)

The characters may not feel like abandoning their new family, of course.

### Dominance

The characters may reach the summit and decide that the *razides'* offer is not for them, attacking them outright before listening to any deal, or bargaining for souls. The *razides* honestly do not expect such aggression in these fine surroundings, allowing the characters to get the drop on them.

If the PCs are successful in destroying the *razides*, or driving them back to Inferno via the garden gate, Monarch transfers the building to their ownership before magically transporting himself to another high-rise in another city. A voice in their heads, belonging to an abstraction of the Death Angel Thaumiel, offers them complete power to remold Novaville how they see fit. All they need do is serve.

Or they could simply leave with their McGuffin, ignore Thaumiel's offer, and attempt to fit back into normal life.

Each character is now Enlightened, and each can see denizens of Inferno wherever they go. They now serve Inferno, willingly or not.

Normal life is a thing of the past.



# NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

## Cultists

The cultists are a varied group of people, but they are all fanatically enthralled by the Monarch's power and twisted by Chaumiel's will. Vary their weaponry and behavior as you see fit and where they appear during the story.

**Home:** Elysium.

**Creature type:** Human.

**Combat** [2], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [-].

**Combat [Novice]**

- ◆ Attack with fanatic ferocity.
- ◆ Grab hold of someone and drag them away.

**Influence [Weak]**

- ◆ Disclose something about the Monarch and the different floors.

### Attacks

The cultists are fanatics and will not break under violent threats. Several attacks are described below so you can create variation and distinction for the different cultists.

**Unarmed:** Punch/kick [1] [Distance: arm]; Grapple and hold [-] [Distance: arm, victim must **Act Under Pressure** to break free]; Charge [1] [Distance: room, victim knocked prone]; Drag away [1] [Distance: arm, victim gets dragged away into another part of the building].

**Light weapon (knife, club, broken bottle, and similar weapons):** Attack [2] [Distance: arm].

**Heavy weapon (heavy wrench, fire axe, heavy iron pipe):** Attack [3] [Distance: arm].

### Wounds & Harm Moves

**Wounds:** ○○ ☠

- ◆ Wounded, but fights on.
- ◆ Dying, but can be saved.
- ◆ Death.

## The Jailer (1st floor)

Use the *Cultist* template, but with the following changes.

### Wounds & Harm Moves

**Wounds:** ○○○ ☠

- ◆ Moans with pleasure.
- ◆ Rubber suit rips open and blood gushes out.
- ◆ Gets an erection.
- ◆ Dies while ejaculating.

## Insane Killer (4th floor)

Use the *Cultist* template, but with the following changes.

### Attacks

**Chainsaw:** Bury the saw deep [3] [Distance: arm]; Messy cuts [2] [Distance: arm, may hit up to 2 targets].

### Wounds & Harm Moves

**Wounds:** ○○○○ ☠

- ◆ Ignores the pain.
- ◆ Blood gushes forth.
- ◆ Stagger back, looking for an opening to escape.
- ◆ Dies, but awakens within minutes with full health. This continues happening until the body is completely destroyed or thrown off the building.

## Formally Dressed Cultist (13th floor)

Use the *Cultist* template, but with the following changes.

### Attacks

**Magic:** Mutate flesh [-] [Distance: room, **Keep it Together** to resist the spell. On (-9), the victim's flesh and skin starts to swell and mutate. It rips through their clothes, expanding like ferid dough. This counts as a stabilized **Critical Wound**].

## Creature of Madness (9th and 29th floor)

These twisted beings are spawned out of madness. They take the shape of people who the characters have some sort of connection to, but horribly mutated. Their eyes are locked open in wild stares, their limbs twisted, and teeth sharpened. Suddenly, they'll change form and shape into something or someone completely different.

**Home:** The Monarch (Elysium and Inferno).

**Creature type:** Creature of Madness.

**Combat** [1], **Influence** [-], **Magic** [2].

**Combat [Weak]**

- ◆ Claw and bite.

**Magic [Novice]**

- ◆ Read thoughts.
- ◆ Break mind.

### Attacks

The Creatures of Madness tries reading their victims' minds, and then break them by pulling out traumas from their pasts. Sometimes, they lash out in attacks of pure hatred, screaming and attacking with sharp claws and teeth.

**Unarmed:** Claw and bite [1].

**Magic:** Read thoughts [-] [Distance: room, target must **Keep it Together** or truthfully answer 2 questions]; Break mind [-] [Distance: room, target must **Keep it Together** or reduce **Stability** (-2)].

### Wounds & Harm Moves

**Wounds:** ○○○○ ☠

- ◆ A bleeding wound.
- ◆ Tries to flee, only to appear later.
- ◆ Changes shape to someone the person cares for or fears.
- ◆ Death.



### The Thing Beneath the Floor (25th floor)

Falling into a hole on 25th floor takes the character directly into the writhing maw of a massive Creature of Madness infesting the entire floor. The character suffers **3 Harm** each time until they manage to climb out. Victim must **Act Under Pressure** to climb out.

### Razides (Penthouse)

**Creature type:** Razide serving the Death Angel, Thaumi.

#### Abilities

- ◆ *Monstrous form:* Those who see the creature's true form must **Keep it Together** to not panic.
- ◆ *Gigantic:* Cannot be grappled or *knocked over* in close combat. Melee attacks the razides make, which connect, always cause the target to be *knocked over*.
- ◆ *Natural weapons:* The creature has weapons embedded in his body, either implanted or natural.
- ◆ *Body of metal and machinery:* All **Harm** taken is reduced by **-1**.

**Combat** [5], **Influence** [-], **Magic** [2].

#### Combat [Powerful]

- ◆ Attack two opponents at once.
- ◆ Impale on claws [**Act Under Pressure** to get away].
- ◆ Rip someone apart [**+2 Harm**].
- ◆ Destroy opponent's weapon.

#### Magic [Novice]

- ◆ See through the Illusion.
- ◆ Inflict pain [**Keep it Together** to break free].

#### Attacks

The razide fights like a raging animal, trying to rip and slash his opponents to shreds.

*Claws:* Slash two opponents [2] [Distance: arm]; Impale [2] [Distance: arm, **Act Under Pressure** to get loose].

Rip apart [4] [Distance: arm]; Destroy weapon [-] [Distance: arm, target's weapon is shredded to pieces].

#### Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○ ☠

- ◆ The attack reflects off the creature's metal hide.
- ◆ Turns his focus on the most recent attacker and ignores the others until she's defeated.
- ◆ A tube bursts open, splashing a red-black, slippery fluid over the floor (**Act Under Pressure** to move around).
- ◆ The attack penetrates one of the razides's eyes (+1 on next roll).
- ◆ One of the razide's arms is broken, shot off, or severed (can't attack two opponents).
- ◆ A big wriggling larvae is exposed in razides's chest (**Act Under Pressure** -2 to hit, **+2 Harm**).
- ◆ The razide dies with an inhuman scream.

### The Pinstripe Man

**Home:** The Monarch (Elysium and Inferno).

**Creature type:** Human Madness magician in service of the Death Angel, Thaumi.

#### Abilities

- ◆ *Magic:* Lore of Madness, Lore of Death

**Combat** [1], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [5].

#### Combat [Weak]

- ◆ Well aimed shot.

#### Influence [Considerable]

- ◆ Reveal something about the Truth.
- ◆ Leader of the custists.
- ◆ Command the Razides.

#### Magic [Exceptional]

- ◆ Master (IV) in the Lore of Madness.
- ◆ Adept (III) in the Lore of Death.
- ◆ Full control of Space and Time within the Monarch.
- ◆ Open gate to Inferno.
- ◆ Awaken a body that has died inside the Monarch.

#### Attacks

The Pinstripe Man trusts his Razides to do the fighting. He stands back and allows them to deal with the conflict.

*Unarmed:* Punch [1] [Distance: arm].

*Automatic pistol (handgun):* Aimed shot [2] [Distance: room].

#### Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○ ☠

- ◆ Screams in anger as his suit is ruined.
- ◆ Bleeding wound.
- ◆ Dying, and tries to make a deal.
- ◆ Death.