



THE WAR-SLOUGH

TIAMAT'S LAIR

A cave mouth leads into Tiamat's lair, a massive mountain and cave system which is one of the routes into Dis. But Tiamat protects the other layers of the Nine Hells from potential invaders by guarding these passages vigilantly. Access to her lair is even more difficult because a massive pit of wretched souls blocks the way. This pit and numerous abishai keep outsiders from entering Tiamat's Lair.

Koh Tam advises against attempting passage this way, for the devils of the Nine Hells have many agents in Avernus and the characters' forcing their way through Tiamat's Lair would certainly be noticed.

THE PILLAR OF SKULLS

At the edge of the layer, next to the entrance to Dis, lies the Pillar of Skulls—a multiple-mile high monument to the Blood War. Skulls of fallen demons and devils are stacked on top of each other, creating a gruesome landmark. As the characters

approach they hear a cackle and sigh, as if the skulls themselves have a story to whisper to them. But the noise appears to just be the hot wind scouring bone and dirt.

TEMPTATION OF HARM

"The Stuff of Nightmares"

If the pillar of skulls is searched a tattered book with a leathery cover is found. If a character takes the item, run the appropriate temptation event found in chapter 2.

THE WAR-SLOUGH

The location most interesting to characters seeking phylacteries is the War-Slough, a vast battlefield upon which demons and devils have been slaughtering one another for eons. Here is where the characters may find what they seek in Avernus ...

ADVENTURE: THE WAR-SLOUGH

The War-Slough in Avernus, site of the Great Fray, was home to a devastating war between devils and demons and what's left is a nightmarish collection of lost devil units, wandering demons, and corruption. The characters might come here searching for a soul phylactery.

If the characters tell Koh Tam that they wish to visit the War-Slough, or if they are not certain where to travel to next, he recites the following tale:

"Once there was a battle that pushed even the limits of the Nine Hells to past their breaking point. Devils still talk of the Great Fray in hushed voices, mostly because of the infernal bureaucracy it still causes. On that day the skies of Avernus opened, and the demons just kept coming through, host upon host of them. And the blazing and barbed armies of the Nine Hells rose to meet them, as they always do, and it went on. And on. A single engagement of the Blood War that raged back and forth while, on more mundane planes, mortal lifetimes came and went, empires rose and fell, species were created and became extinct. Countless demons and devils fought and were destroyed or banished. Countless. That was the problem." Koh Tam pauses, as if not quite sure of where he's taking the story. He glances at you, then continues.

"It's the chaos that did it, of course. All those demons concentrated on a single field, slaughtering the lesser hosts of the Nine Hells through sheer ebullient numbers but being slaughtered in turn. Their ichor being shed in tides that would drown a nation, and again, and again. The demons have been driven off long since, but in some way the Abyss won that engagement. The War-Slough is what's left. And that is where we must search." Koh Tam smiles grimly. "It should be easy to find ... a great sunken bowl miles across, a morass of half-drowned trenches, craters, broken war engines and ruined fortifications. There are artifacts of vast power lost somewhere in the war-strata of the Slough, stockpiles of souls and every unique war-ending engine that failed to end anything. All of it buried in the corrupting mud."

ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

If the characters are struggling to decide what to do, or about to set out without being sufficiently prepared, Koh Tam can help nudge or guide them with the following advice:

- There are some devils that seek mortals to enter the War-Slough and find discarded weapons from the Blood War. They should search the borders for such a devil as it might help them find what they're looking for.
- The War-Slough can warp those who stay too long, so they should make haste.

Koh Tam also gives them an infernal map. Show the players the map of the War-Slough in appendix F. They can use this map to decide which points of interest they want to explore. Refer to the "Using an Infernal Map" section of chapter 2. A failed or successful Wisdom (Survival) check to use this map has a 50 percent chance of triggering an encounter on the Random Encounters in the War-Slough table.

DEMON BLOOD

The corrupting mud of the War-Slough exists due to the sheer unparalleled quantity of demonic blood that has been shed in this single concentrated engagement. Normally the ground of the Nine Hells is inhospitable terrain for anything so undisciplined. Chaos runs off it like water from weaved cloth. Even the resilience of the Nine Hells has limits. Eventually they fought ankle-deep, knee-deep. The stuff just didn't soak away, and the field became a nightmarish quagmire reeking of the wild Abyss. The very sight of the War-Slough sends shudders down the spines of lesser devils.

Because of the corrupted demon blood, when a creature has spent more than an hour in the War-Slough it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Fiends, Oozes, Plants, and Undead automatically succeed on the saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is warped by the demon blood, as determined by rolling on the Flesh Warping table.

When a creature takes a short rest in the War-Slough, they must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to resist having their flesh warped. A long rest requires succeeding on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. A spell that removes a curse ends all demon blood related warping effects on a creature.

THE FOREVER WAR

The War-Slough isn't abandoned. To evacuate it you'd have to master it, and the place is beyond even Zariel's dominion. It doesn't matter what nebulous period of time has passed since the Great Fray: the combatants on both sides are immortal, and there are plenty left in the Slough still trying to fight the

dead battle. On the nominal side of the Nine Hells, units of single-minded **merregons** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) from the handfuls to the hundreds slog endlessly through the mire, cut off from any

FLESH WARPING

d10 Effect

- 1 The creature's eyes push out of its head on the end of stalks.
- 2 One of the creature's legs grows longer than the other, reducing its walking speed by 10 feet.
- 3 The creature's eyes become beacons, filling a 15-foot cone with dim light when they're open.
- 4 The creature's ears tear free from its head and scurry away; the creature has the deafened condition.
- 5 The creature's arms become tentacles with fingers on the ends, increasing its reach by 5 feet.
- 6 The creature's legs grow incredibly long and springy, increasing its walking speed by 10 feet.
- 7 The creature grows a whiplike tail, it can now use a bonus action to make one tail attack (treat the tail as a whip.)
- 8 The creature's ears become wings, giving it a flying speed of 5 feet.
- 9 The creature's body becomes unusually brittle, causing the target to gain vulnerability to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- 10 The creature grows another head, causing it to have advantage on saving throws against the charmed, frightened, or stunned conditions.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE WAR-SLOUGH

d6 Predator

- 1 A flock of three **shredwings** (see appendix B) circles in the distance.
- 2 A gang of five bulbous **hezrou** (speed 20) erupt from a pool of demonic ichor.
- 3 A lost legion of one hundred **merregon** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) march in formation, ignoring anything that doesn't get in their way. A headless **horned devil** leads them.
- 4 A corpse worm (**purple worm** with the Fiend type) erupts from the ground beneath the characters.
- 5 A squad of a dozen insane **merregon** mistakes the characters for demons.
- 6 Two **horned devils** fused together (they always occupy the same space but have their own turns) lead a battalion of two dozen **merregon**. One horned devil orders the battalion to attack, while the other orders them to march in formation. Each round there is a 50 percent chance of the merregon obeying either leader.

orders after too many usurpations and reappointments up the chain of command. Beyond any hope of returning to the infernal hierarchy they attack just about anything on sight, including each other. Brutal, yet simultaneously pathetic and desperate, they scream codewords and countersigns as though hoping to hear some word of authority that they're past the point of ever recognizing.

A number of infernal generals were lost to the Great Fray, and some are still in there. Fighting the infinitely shifting hosts of the abyss broke them one after another, leaving them unable to trust any external authority for fear of falling for a demonic trick. They maintain their camps and shrunken domains in the ruins of fallen fortifications and tell themselves that they continue the fight even as they raid one another or make sham alliances that they know will be broken in heartbeats.

Aside from the pathetic remnants of devil armies, the War-Slough has developed an ecology of sorts. There is always a meal to be had for an opportunistic scavenger. One-off mutated creations roam forlorn over its churned surface or slither through its trenches. Demons stalk and worry at the ineffable meat of fallen Fiends, growing fat and corrupt with demonic taint. There are tentacled things in the lakes of demon-ichor and vast corpse-worms that burrow through the slimy soil. For every hideous monster there is something worse still to prey upon it.

WAR-SLOUGH ENCOUNTERS

Every time the characters take a short or long rest in the War-Slough roll on the Random Encounters in the War-Slough table. Then roll a d6. On a 1–3 the random encounter interrupts the rest. On a 4–6 the encounter happens a few minutes after the rest is finished.

ESCAPING THE SLOUGH

If a creature tries to leave the War-Slough after being there for more than 8 hours, the demonic taint fights to stop them from leaving. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or find that they don't want to leave. They may make another DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to escape only after they finish a short or long rest. However, if they haven't killed a living creature since their last attempt, the DC increases to 25.

WAR-SLOUGH LOCATIONS

There are those who go to the War-Slough by choice. Why would anyone? Well, there are all those lost artifacts and items of fearsome power that are in there somewhere, if one could only track them down. There's enough potent treasure for any number of daring hunters to retire on, plus stored souls to power every warship on the Styx for half an eternity.

W1: SENTRY TOWER

Technically, Zariel has set a prohibition against any devil entering the War-Slough, to avoid the region being destabilized any further. Because of this prohibition, ambitious devils bargain with mortals to trick or bribe them to enter the Slough seeking rumored treasures. One such is an **amnizu** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) named Rexlexkala. He approaches the characters if he sees them on the border of the War-Slough. Once he has convinced them that he doesn't intend harm, he explains what he has to offer them:

"You will find it easy to enter the War-Slough. While there is a ring of towers about the perimeter, they are far-spaced, and sentry duty is a punishment detail for lowly devils who survived failed actions in the Blood War. The constant prickle of the demonic at the backs of these pathetic devils serves as sufficient distraction that diligent intruders can easily sneak past.

However, getting out of the Slough is harder. The truth is that the Slough, through the sheer weight of wasted life and passion and its unique admixture of the infernal and the demonic, has become something like a sentient thing, a kind of insensate god of wasted wrath. It does not want to let go of anyone or anything that falls into its clutches, and over time its influence turns everything within it to a lost, furious combatant seeking to perpetuate a meaningless war.

However, I have something that can help you avoid that fate, but only if you help me retrieve something."

Rexlexkala has learned the location of an infernal artifact designed millennia ago to end the Great Fray. The artifact is a horn built to allow devils to listen in on the thoughts of demons while they're in Avernus, even powerful demon lords. Such an item is worthless to mortal adventurers but is of supreme value to an archdevil such as Zariel. Rexlexkala will give 10 *Soul Coins* for the horn. In addition, he provides each character with a vial of *Condensed Order* (see appendix D.) In addition to the substance's normal effects, it also allows them to leave the War-Slough without requiring a Wisdom saving throw first. Finally, he has studied the War-Slough for centuries and can give advice on how to find things within. If the characters agree to his terms, Rexlexkala gives them a map to a rift which is located deep within the War-Slough (reveal area W4 on the infernal map). In this rift lie buried many weapons left over from the Blood War.

He will also answer questions from the characters if they agree to his task or he feels his life is threatened.

- If the characters ask him for help in finding the phylactery of the queen, he says that they will find it at an abandoned tower which is located deep within the War-Slough. It dates from a time when the War-Slough was much smaller.
- If the characters ask him for help in finding the phylactery of the brother, he tells them that they will find what they're looking for at the largest of the demon-ichor lakes located in the Slough.

W2: RUINED TOWER

Through the haze, you see the outline of a tower ahead, rising over five hundred feet into smoke choked skies. Winged devils circle around the tower's peak and companies of devils march near its entrance.

The characters notice the tower when they get within 300 feet of it. It was built centuries ago to guard the borders of the War-Slough when it was much smaller. Now the top floor of the tower is the roost of a marilith. She wraps her snake body around an infernal throne, a remnant from the Blood War. The throne allows a Fiend to control lesser devils as if its occupant were at the top of the infernal hierarchy. The marilith, a demon, uses it to amuse herself by having all the devils in the region perform whatever whim comes into her head. The marilith is easier to defeat if the characters enter the tower without her knowing, but there are several obstacles to achieving that.



The first obstacle is a half dozen **barbed devils** and a half dozen **bearded devils** marching back and forth along the road to the entrance. If observed, they're seemingly following orders that only they hear. They'll attack anyone that they see, but it is easy to avoid them when they're marching away from the tower. When first discovered they're 90 feet away from the tower and marching back towards it. Every turn, there is a 50 percent chance they reverse direction. Any noise makes them Dash towards the direction of that distraction, but they ignore anything that happens overhead, because they're, after all, mere foot soldiers. If these devils engage in combat with the characters, each round, one devil attempts to Dash back to the tower at "A" and if any devil reaches it, this obstacle is considered failed.

The second obstacle is only encountered if the characters approach the tower by air. If they do so, and are noticed, they're confronted by four **bone devils** that patrol the skies about 600 feet above ground. One of the bone devils will Dash to the window ("C" on the map) 100 feet away that leads into the "Throne Room". If it reaches that window, this obstacle is considered failed.

The final obstacle is within the tower. The interior is mostly an empty ruin, with a simple stone staircase rising upwards. But 1d4 **shadow demons** linger at each location marked "B" on the staircase (see the "Ruined Tower" map). These shadow demons attempt to hide from the characters and, if not discovered, they ascend to the next "B" (or to the "Throne Room," if the uppermost "B" has been reached). If any shadow demons reach the throne room, this obstacle is considered failed. If discovered, the shadow demons attack the characters.

The Throne Room. The **marilith** is dressed up in the garments of a queen and attended to by four **bearded devils** that wear the fine clothing of palace courtiers and are busy entertaining the marilith. The marilith and her minions are unaware of the heroes until they announce themselves, or come within 15 feet of the throne, unless they've failed 2 or more of the previous obstacles, in which case she is very much aware of them. There is an additional bearded devil for every failed obstacle.

Once aware of them, the marilith and her devil courtiers mock the characters. They do this until the intruders attempt to leave or show any sort of disrespect, then they attack. If the marilith is killed her body vanishes and she appears on her throne 1d6 rounds later with 100 hit points. Only by destroying the throne can she be killed. The throne has an AC of 15 and 100 hit points.

The Phylactery of the Queen. If a character that has chosen this phylactery enters this room, read the following upon entering:

A servant dressed in rags washes the floor at the base of a throne occupied by a serpentine woman wearing a royal purple gown and a sparkling crown. As the servant glances your way, it topples the bucket of dirtied water beside it. The water rolls out, hissing as it evaporates against the stone floor. The queen shrieks and chides the servant for being a clumsy fool and orders it to refill the bucket. The servant's shoulders slump as it retrieves the bucket. The face of the servant is strangely familiar.

In a fight this servant (**commoner**) doesn't participate, even if attacked directly. Once the queen is permanently slain, the servant contorts and twists, leaving behind the character's soul phylactery.

W3: ICHOR LAKE AND THE DEMON NEST

A huge circular rift drops one 100 feet into the depths of the Slough. Small streams of demonic ichor cascade over its edges. At the bottom of this foul place the demonic ichor of the War-Slough has gathered into a large lake that seethes and bubbles with unconstrained malice and possibility. At its center is an island that resembles a massive ant nest with entrances to caves or perhaps burrows. The smoke, haze, and muck make it nearly impossible to discern whether creatures occupy the tunnels below.

For some time, Zariel's underlings held out hope that a finite number of demons remained, and they would slowly dwindle away over the eons until none were left and the Slough might revert to Avernus' natural state. The most recent Infernal Survey of the place found ample evidence that concentrations of demonic material (resembling nests) were spawning random demons at least as fast as the creatures were being killed off. Through these nests, the War-Slough perpetuates itself. The island at the center of the lake is one such nest.

W3A: ENTRANCE

Moist ichor covers the floors and walls. There's a pounding noise in the distance, as if a large machine is rumbling away, performing some unfathomable work. The tunnels seem to undulate, in rhythm with the noise, and in places you think you see terrible faces etched into the stone. Many tunnels appear to lead into caves where ichor has accumulated.



W3B: THE CAVES

Each cave has **hezrou** and **barlgura** embedded in its walls, many only partially formed. Blood vessels in the walls pump demonic ichor into the catatonic demons. Attacking any of them awakens 1d6 of each.

W3C: DEMONS

A mixture of two dozen **dretches** and **manes** mill about mindlessly in these caves. They ignore intruders but descend with fury on anyone who attacks them.

W3D: THE LAKE

A great lake of ichor sits before you, undulating to the demonic rhythm that has only grown louder. Along the shoreline you see a small demon clamber out of the ichor, its arm covered in dozens of eyeballs. It pays you no heed and shambles down a tunnel. Across the grotesque expanse is an island upon which sits a heart the size of an elephant. This heart pumps demonic ichor into the blood vessels permeating these caverns.



Coming into contact with the ichor of the lake forces a creature to succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or roll on the Flesh Warping table. Gibbering **dretches** or **manes** demons that spawn from the demonic heart swim across the lake. They ignore anyone they see and emerge from the lake with a new deformity (use the Flesh Warping table for examples). These demons tend to accumulate in the various caves. The characters need to cross the lake to reach “The Heart.”

W3E: THE HEART

The island is about 60 feet from the shore. Once it is reached, the characters can walk up to the heart itself. The heart has an AC of 8 and 200 hit points. Killing it causes the lake to become inert. However, as soon as it is damaged, the heart will awaken the hezrou and barlgura to come to its aid. On initiative count 10 of each round 1d4 of each arrive in the chamber and begin swimming across the lake.

When the lake becomes inert all the demons act as if they’re under the *Confusion* spell. However, instead of acting normally on rolling a 9 or a 10 (as per the spell), this roll results in the demon inflating like a balloon and then exploding, showering demonic ichor in a 10-foot-radius. Anyone in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be forced to roll on the Flesh Warping table.

The Phylactery of the Brother. A character who seeks their brother’s soul, notices movement in the ground underneath the demonic heart.

There’s a glimmer of movement beneath sticky ichor pooling under the pulsating heart. For a moment you see your brother’s face protrude from the floor. He glances your way but briefly, a grimace of pain on his face, before succumbing and falling back into the ichor.

Once the heart is slain, the ichor can be pulled aside, and the brother’s phylactery recovered. The character gains the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

W4: CANYON TROVE

A vast and twisted battlefield extends before you, cleaved in two by a massive canyon. Whether the canyon existed before that great battle, or arose because of it, you cannot be certain. A trail, paved in corpses, descends into the canyon.

TEMPTATION OF ANGER

“Sentient Artifact”

The characters’ attention is drawn by a voice from a nearby pile of corpses. If they investigate, they find a powerful artifact buried within. This is an opportunity to conjure a tempting reward for one of the characters; select a character and an item they’ve been coveting. That is the item they now find. You may also select an item that multiple characters might want so that they may argue among themselves over who gains possession of it.

Once one character has taken the item, run the “Sentient Artifact” temptation event found in chapter 2.

This isolated canyon descends into the depths of the Slough and is where the real treasures of the War-Slough are found, including the horn that Rexlexkala desires. Strange things occur sporadically as the characters descend, the place twisted and distorted by the great war. When a character least expects it (perhaps just after a rest, or in the midst of battle), a grotesque tentacle with a shrieking mouth instead of suckers bursts from the canyon wall to flail about wildly before withdrawing again. The tentacles are harmless unless the characters decide to attack one (then the tentacles have the statistics of a **guardian naga**, but 0 movement speed, lawful evil alignment and no spellcasting trait).

Though the tentacles can be safely ignored, there are real dangers in the canyon. And to find items of true value, the characters have to make an effort to explore, heading deep into the canyon’s bowels. Each hour the characters make a DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check to search for clues that might lead them to the treasures they seek. Failure results in an encounter, while success leads to treasure.

Encounter. The first time the characters fail their search results in them encountering the “Temptation of Anger.” Afterwards, on future failures, roll a d8. 1–4 means an empty cave; 5–6 means they stumble upon 1d2 **glabrezu**; a 7–8 means they find 1d4 **hezrou**.

Treasure. Every time the characters succeed in their search for clues, they have a 50 percent chance of finding Rexlexkala’s Horn. Otherwise, they roll on the Infernal Items table. For a description of these items see appendix D. When they find the item, it might be in the clutches of a tentacle that erupts from the canyon walls, or it might be lodged at the bottom of a bubbling pool of demon ichor (which is a **black pudding** with 120 hit points and immunity to fire damage). After 3 such items, they’ll no longer find any more infernal items here and even successful searches are now treated as failures.

Rexlexkala’s Horn. A **nalfeshnee** carries the artifact that Rexlexkala seeks and won’t relinquish it without a fight. The artifact looks like a metallic



A BRAVE PROSPECTOR VENTURES INTO THE TROVE DESPITE ITS DANGERS.

horn, but if touched it begins to wriggle like a grotesque worm. Other than this it can be handled safely. An *Identify* spell reveals that it is meant to be swallowed to attune to it, but if anyone other than a devil does so, they gain none of its powers and instead are afflicted with a random major insanity that can't be removed until the artifact is extracted.

INFERNAL ITEMS

d10	Item	Danger
1	<i>Bracers of Asmodeus</i>	None
2	<i>Infernal Plate Armor</i>	Pool of demon ichor
3	<i>Stygian Spear</i>	Tentacle
4	<i>Canian Fork</i>	Pool of demon ichor
5	<i>Demonbone Polearm</i>	2d6 barlguras
6	<i>Sword of Retribution</i>	Yellow mold
7	<i>Infernal Amulet</i>	Angry horned devil
8–10	Ancient Blood War Weapon (see Ancient Blood War Weapons table)	None

ANCIENT BLOOD WAR WEAPONS

d4 Blood War Weapon

- 1 This is a fleshy, blood-hued sphere and if an action is used to squeeze it hard enough, it erupts into a 500-foot-radius *Cloudkill* that harms only Fiends.
- 2 This box casts bright light for 200 feet and dim light for 1,000 feet. Covering it negates the light. An *Identify* spell reveals that the box is full of divine energy and will explode if opened. If an action is used to open the box, every creature in a 100-foot-radius takes 70 (20d6) radiant damage and the box is destroyed.
- 3 This ornate fan is comprised of dozens of partly melted blades. When an action is used to unfurl the blades, spores are released in a 40-foot-radius. Any demon in the area must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, they take 35 (10d6) necrotic damage and one affliction from the Flesh Warping table. Once used, the fan can't be used again until a long rest is finished.
- 4 This is a bag with 10d10 strange seeds inside. If a seed is planted in the Nine Hells, it immediately grows into a corrupted **shrieker**. Any demon that doesn't have the deafened condition and starts its turn within 30 feet of a corrupted shrieker takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage. This damage doesn't stack with damage from other corrupted shriekers.



AT THE CENTER OF THE AGORA OF
FLOATING KNIVES SITS ORISHADA'S PALACE.

CHAPTER 4

Dis, the City of Burning Iron



AMED FOR ITS RULER, THE IRON LORD Dispater, Dis is the second layer of the Nine Hells and largely dominated by the city of the same name which is ringed by jagged mountains. Within the city, characters may find some of the items they're searching for.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Dis Overview” section. It provides you with everything you need to guide your players through Dis and its sprawling city.

ENCOUNTERS

After arriving in Dis, the players must either navigate the River Styx or follow the Iron Road to venture into the City of Dis. Their destination is the Agora of Floating Knives with Orishada’s Palace at its center. Whilst on the river, journeying into the city, roll at least once on the Random Encounters in Dis table.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN DIS

d6 Encounter

- 1 A pack of six **lemures** have escaped the mines they were working. Four **hell hounds** pursue close behind.
- 2 Eight **spined devils** attack without provocation, mostly just for sport. They retreat from opponents who give as good as they get.
- 3 The characters notice an **imp** crouching on the rooftops, presumably spying on them.
- 4 A githyanki trade caravan makes its way toward the City of Dis. A half dozen **githyanki knights** on **young red dragons** provide protection.
- 5 A lone **barbed devil** approaches and demands 100 gp as tax for traveling across Dispater’s realm. If he is attacked, he calls upon a pair of **war devils** (see appendix B) circling hundreds of feet above to protect him.
- 6 A blazing orb of iron, seemingly ejected from a faraway mine, lands on a random character. It explodes and that character, and each creature in 20-foot-radius sphere, must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 70 (20d6) fire damage and 70 (20d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The collected fragments of the orb are worth 2,000 gp.

LOCATIONS

When the characters arrive in the city have Koh Tam provide information about the city and its different areas (see “Key Locations in the City of Dis” for a description). The players need to make their way to the Agora of Floating Knives, the trade district in the City of Dis. If the players decide to venture into any of the other areas of the city, you can use the information provided in this section to guide them on a short excursion. However, the conditions of these locales may quickly deter them from venturing there too long.

KOH TAM AND TIAX

At the Agora, give the players plenty of time to explore. Koh Tam or Tiax can provide them with directions to the different areas of the Agora and its market stalls. If Tiax is accompanying the characters into the Agora, roll on the Troubles with Tiax table in chapter 1 to see if their outing with the gnome is eventful.

At this point, Koh Tam reminds the characters that his barge is able to *Plane Shift* to a layer of the Nine Hells above the current one, at any time. It requires a full action for him to activate the ability.

OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your players’ objectives and lead them to the corresponding areas so they can complete their goals. Once the players have explored all the different areas within the Agora of Floating Knives, make your way to Orishada’s Palace.

The following objectives can be attained in Dis:

OBJECTIVES IN DIS

Objective	Location
<i>Instrument of the Bards</i> (Ollamh Harp)	The Agora of Floating Knives: Barges of Theater
<i>Cloak of Invisibility</i>	The Agora of Floating Knives: The Market of Killers
Phylactery of the bounty	The Agora of Floating Knives: The Market of Victims
Phylactery of the chosen one	The Agora of Floating Knives: The Arena
Phylactery of patricide	Orishada’s Palace: Kitchens
<i>Iron Horn of Valhalla</i>	Orishada’s Palace: Aelvette
<i>Wrought-Iron Tower</i>	Orishada’s Palace: The Floating Duke

TEMPTATIONS

Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Dis. You can of course have them encounter more if you want. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

TROUBLED REST

The characters might need to be encouraged to use all their various spells and means of obtaining information to track down the items and phylacteries they seek. At times you may also want to disturb their rest—perhaps resurfacing some of the nightmares described in the Introduction—as they approach layers of the Nine Hells where objects they need to obtain are to be found.

Nudge them towards stopping and exploring each layer appropriately but allow them the freedom to come up with clever ways to find what they seek.

DIS OVERVIEW

Outside the city proper, the layer is a mountainous crag land rich in ore deposits. Dispater ordered the construction of the Iron Road, a pathway made of iron and cobblestone, to navigate the mountains and extract the minerals located within. Since its construction, the mountains are mined, and ore transported back to Dis for refinement.

Coiling down mountains high enough to reach Avernum is the Styx. It winds its way down towards Dis and crosses directly through before moving downwards towards Minauros. The city has an intricate canal system which the river flows through. With high walls and a deep bottom, navigators of the Styx see only the tops of buildings as they pass through the city. An artificial runoff near the middle of the city was created, with a large iron gate, allowing travelers to enter the city proper by taking a slight detour.

Dispater remains the ruler of Dis and an ally of Asmodeus, and he intends for it to stay that way. Fortification of Dispater's layer continues unabated at his behest, in preparation for some future war. Assuming inhabitants follow the rules of the realm, they're given relative freedom to go about their business.

THE CITY OF DIS

The city lies nestled within a fiery ring of mountains, with the only two ways in or out being the Iron Road and the River Styx. It is described by visitors as impossibly large and yet cramped at the same time. Like the Iron Road, its buildings are constructed from a mix of cobblestone and burning iron, both mined from the mountains of the realm. Because the iron is heated, it emits smoke and covers the city in a smog, making it difficult to

THE IRON TOWER OF DISPATER
LOOMS OVER THE CITY OF DIS.





see and breathe for mortals. Additionally, the city and the Iron Road are bathed in a warm light from the burning steel, with the surrounding mountains remaining dark aside from the lit mines. When the realm doesn't smell like smoke, it takes on the scent of burning flesh and blood.

Extraplanar travelers often stop in the city before moving on, due to its reputation as a hub for trade and commerce within the layers. Many bazaars and shops are set up offering strange wares from different planes, and Dispater encourages any on the plane to establish contracts whenever possible. These contracts usually involve souls and the greater devils, who make homes in the massive iron towers scattered throughout the town. Beneath the city lies a labyrinthian structure of dungeons, said to contain mortals from the Material Plane. Vents in certain areas of the city allow bloodcurdling screams to float up from below.

LEAVING DIS

Unlike leaving Avernus, traveling deeper into the Nine Hells from Dis is quite difficult. The only two known passages are the Styx and a staircase, both of which descend to Minauros. Though the location of the staircase isn't publicly known, everyone assumes it to be located within Dispater's Iron

Tower, making it difficult to find without connections. The Styx is especially dangerous, as the drop from Dis to Minauros consists of steep inclines, rapids, and waterfalls. It takes a seasoned captain or a large amount of luck to navigate the passage, leaving nascent souls or mortals without means of traveling deeper.

FEATURES

Iron itself bends to the influence of Dis. Whenever a good-aligned creature touches nonmagical iron, they take 4 (1d8) fire damage. This includes armor or weapons that creatures might be using, ammunition, storage devices, keys, etc. A *Protection from Good and Evil* spell or similar effect allows creatures to resist this effect for the duration.

As the most lawful of the infernal planes, visitors to this plane become bound to their words and contracts. Any time a mortal gives a promise, enters into a contract, or otherwise ensures their end of a bargain, they find themselves magically compelled to follow. A creature that breaks such a bond while on Dis takes 32 (5d12) necrotic damage and gains a level of exhaustion.

KEY LOCATIONS IN THE CITY OF DIS

Some of the major locations found in the City of Dis are described below.

THE IRON TOWER OF DISPATER

Though several iron towers decorate the city, none are as large as the Iron Tower, Dispater's fortress and palace. It is visible from anywhere in the city, and through enchantment magic always appears to be very close. Dispater maintains complete control over the tower—including the capability to shift its form and interiors to match his desires—and the tower can only be entered if he permits. If Dispater has no interest in meeting you, even reaching the tower requires tremendous effort and immense willpower.

If the characters decide to visit, they struggle to ever reach the tower. Wherever they're in the city, the tower always appears right around the next corner, but no matter how long they walk, it never gets any closer. If the characters succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom (Survival) check and spend 2d6 hours searching, they finally reach the Iron Tower. If they fail the check, they waste 2d6 hours and are no closer, but they do trigger a random encounter.

After a final push, you reach the tower. Up close it is impossibly large. You squint as you look up but cannot make out its peak. The tower feels unwelcoming, and you feel a great heat emanating from it. There is no sign of door or window—the tower simply looms over you as if in judgment.

Unless the characters have business inside of the tower (and Dispater allows them entry) the characters can't enter.

THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

Devils from all layers are known to travel to Dis solely for the Garden, where all manner of luxuries and pleasures can be enjoyed. The Garden provides the income needed to improve Dispater's city and armies, and it keeps his citizens happy. The Garden also serves as a distraction for the denizens of the Nine Hells from the tortures of everyday existence in this bleak place. However, the characters are mortal beings and the illusions found inside overwhelm their minds. If they explore the Garden of Delights, they become enchanted by its beauty and may forget themselves. For considerable time they're unable to remember their mission and wander the Garden aimlessly.

TEMPTATION OF DECEIT

"The Liar"

While the characters are exploring the Garden, a **succubus** approaches the character with the highest Charisma and offers to give them the power of deception. Run the appropriate temptation event found in chapter 2.

Walls of sandstone rise above you and in front of the wooden doors to the Garden of Delights stand several attractive servants, beckoning you forward. You feel a strong compulsion to approach these comely beings.

The characters may pay 50 gp apiece to enter the Garden. Once inside they're handed cool and delicious (and illusory) drinks. Now roll a d100—this is the number of hours the characters waste, captivated by the illusory delights the garden provides. At the end of this time, a character must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma saving throw to even want to leave, if they fail the saving throw, they spend another d100 hours within and must repeat the saving throw. When the characters finally succeed on the saving throw and depart, each gains a level of exhaustion.

THE GREAT PRISON OF MENTIRI

Mentiri acts as a maximum-security prison for the criminals of the Nine Hells. Inside, inmates are tortured and indoctrinated to ensure they follow the rules of the Nine Hells. This secure prison is located deep within Dis and within its walls

TEMPTATION OF OPPRESSION

"No Pain No Gain"

Read the following the first time the characters travel towards the prison:

Traveling towards Mentiri you pass a group of insect like devils transporting captives to the prison. Suddenly, an elf dressed in expensive looking armor makes a dash for freedom. Within seconds, the man is beset by a huge infernal raptor that carries him screaming into the sky.

Later, on their way down from the prison the characters find the elf's armor on the side of the road but no sign of its former owner. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it to be powerful magic armor. Run the appropriate temptation event found in chapter 2.

If the characters try to save the elf, they must fight the **shredwing** and the four **pain devils** (see appendix B for both) guarding the rest of the prisoners. The elf is already dead when the battle starts; it was just an animated corpse of an elf that has been dead for more than a thousand years.

contains many different kinds of prisoners—outsiders, captives from the Blood War, and others who have broken the laws of the Nine Hells in one way or another. The only way into the prison is being captured and condemned to rot there. The characters are lucky that they've no reason to enter.

THE AGORA OF FLOATING KNIVES

The Agora of Floating Knives is one of the largest trading hubs in the known planes and is welcoming to non-devils.

ADVENTURE: THE AGORA OF FLOATING KNIVES

The Agora of the Floating Knives is an enclave for non-devils made up of floating vessels located on the edge of the great City of Dis. Here mortals can purchase a variety of infernal goods and services.

In the City of Dis you can buy or sell anything, so long as that thing has a chance of harming someone, somewhere. Many of these markets are run by devils for devils, locked away within the cramped streets, behind the high walls. However, Dis is one of the few places in the Nine Hells that can be characterized as even slightly welcoming to outsiders. Travelers visit Dis for many purposes, but a great many come specifically for the Agora of Floating Knives. If the characters tell Koh Tam that they wish to visit the City of Dis, he directs them to the Agora because of its accessibility to outsiders.

Koh Tam gestures towards the city before you. "Dis is a city of commerce. If any of what you seek is here, the Agora of the Floating Knives is our most appealing destination. The Agora is an enclave for non-devils and is situated such that we can sail downriver and reach it without even having to risk the tangled confines of the city proper. Within its hundreds of floating stalls and huts we might find just about anything. And if we don't, we could risk an audience with Orishada, he is a powerful devil, and dangerous as any other, but he runs the Agora and is more willing to speak to outsiders than most."

ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam (or Tiax) offers the following advice to characters, if necessary:

- They should hire an imp to guide them, or allow Tiax to do so, if he's willing.
- They might find what they're searching for in the markets. If not, then they might need to seek an audience with the ruler of the Agora, Orishada, a powerful **amnizu** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*).

• They're likely to see many disturbing things, but if they let on to any discomfort it could lead to trouble.

This is a location well known to many travelers and Koh Tam can provide a standard map of the Agora (see appendix F) to the characters.

APPROACHING FROM THE RIVER STYX

Off the great runoff from the Styx, within the City of Dis, there is an artificial lagoon, square and shadowed by high walls. Here can be found the Agora of Floating Knives.

It is a great armada of floating stalls and huts, house-boats, and rising from its heart an entire palace borne on the deadly waters. Imps and other menial demons can be seen plying gondolas along the narrow channels separating each establishment.

THE OUTER AGORA LOCATIONS

Visitors relying on the services of the **imps** (for the small sum of 10 gp) should be very specific in giving their destination, as the diminutive gondoliers delight in malevolently misinterpreting instructions every bit as much as an archdevil bargaining for a soul.

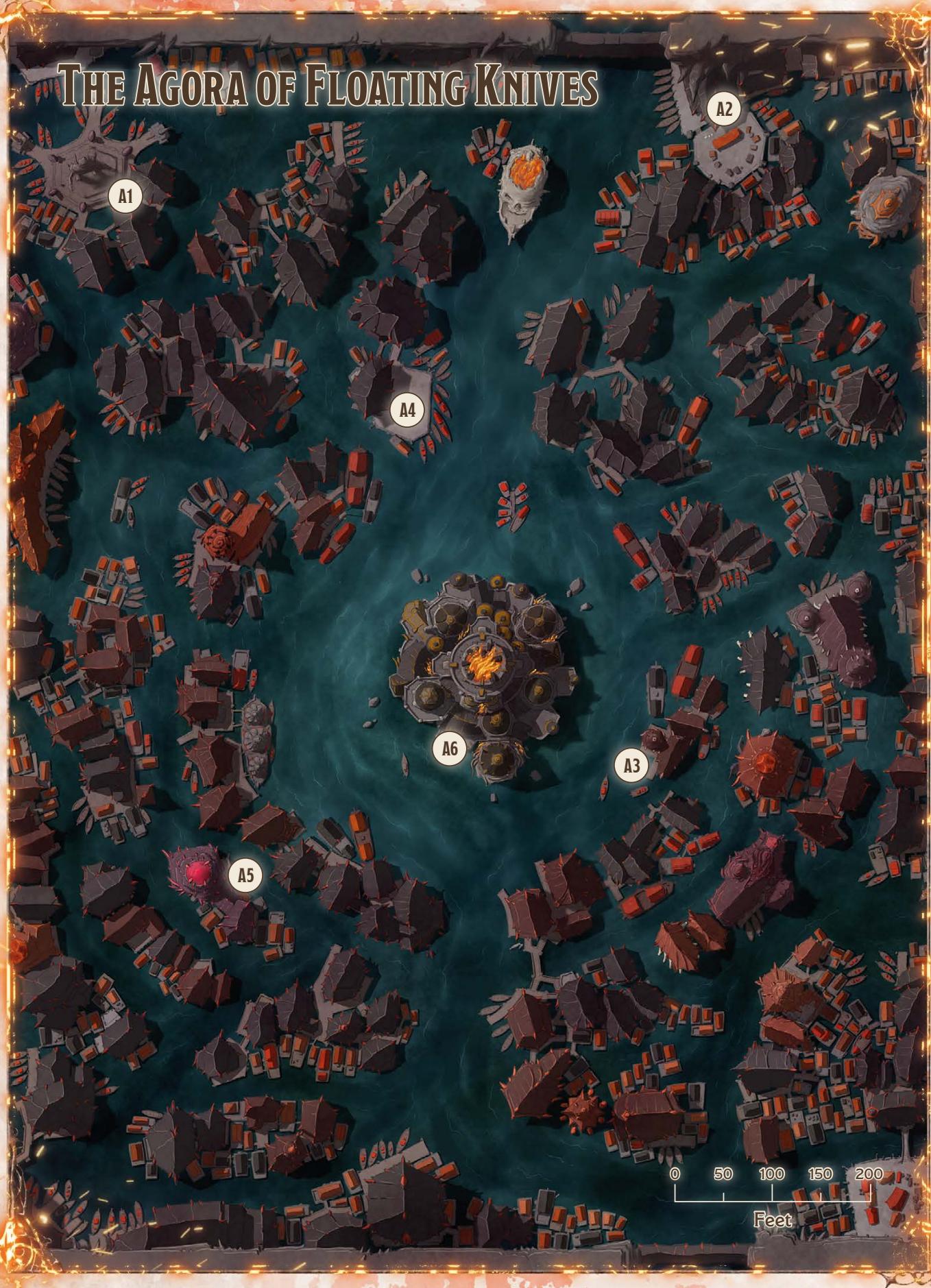
The periphery of the Agora consists of a ramshackle of little boats and rafts that offer the sort of goods that might be found in a dozen dens of vice across Dis, most often from the clawed hands of those who have been barred from more respectable infernal haunts. Vendors from other realms bring goods not native to the Nine Hells in an attempt to tempt diabolic custom, whilst petty devils from lower layers haul up treasures and resources unique to the infernal realms to sell at the small shops located here. There is a lively trade in *Condensed Order*, a silvery powder that can be extracted from those of a lawful persuasion. Devils bound for the warfronts of Avernus take flasks and snuff boxes of the stuff to fortify themselves against exposure to the raw chaos of demons.

Some of the more common items that can be purchased are listed in the Items for Sale table:

ITEMS FOR SALE

Item	Cost
<i>Condensed Order</i>	50 gp
Dream bottle	50 gp
<i>Dust of Sneezing and Choking</i>	250 gp
<i>Oil of Sharpness</i>	2,500 gp
<i>Oil of Slipperiness</i>	250 gp
<i>Potion of Fire Breath</i>	250 gp
<i>Potion of Mind Reading</i>	750 gp

THE AGORA OF FLOATING KNIVES



JOHN STEVENSON

TEMPTATION OF JEALOUSY

"With Friends Like These"

While the characters are perusing wares, an **incubus** approaches and tries to sell an *Amulet of Betrayal* (see appendix D) to one of the characters. The price he offers it for is 1000 gp but he is willing to reduce it to 500 gp, if appropriately convinced.

There is also a thriving trade market. These items are readily available for anyone who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. However, the buyer is only interested in trading for a magic item with *Soul Coins* as an additional cost.

MAGIC ITEMS TRADE COST

Magic Item	Trade In
<i>Mirror of Life Trapping</i>	Rare or very rare wondrous item, plus 3 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Dagger of Venom</i>	Uncommon or rare weapon, plus 1 <i>Soul Coin</i>
<i>Crystal Ball</i>	Rare or very rare wondrous item, plus 3 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Efreeti Bottle</i>	Rare or very rare wondrous item, plus 3 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Ring of Shooting Stars</i>	Rare or very rare ring, plus 3 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Robe of Stars</i>	Rare or very rare magic cloak or robe, plus 3 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Staff of Fire</i>	Rare or very rare magic rod or staff, plus 2 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Staff of Frost</i>	Rare or very rare magic rod or staff, plus 2 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Spellguard Shield</i>	Rare or very rare shield, plus 2 <i>Soul Coins</i>
<i>Nine Lives Stealer</i>	Rare or very rare weapon, plus 2 <i>Soul Coins</i>

A1: THE ARENA

The cheering and jeering of spectators, as well as grunts of pain and shrieks of terror, alerts you to an open arena floating upon a barge. Several lodges are connected to it and from these buildings various challengers emerge, either to fight upon a field of battle, or to take their place against one another at tables of various games of chance.

Just as you approach a devil knocks a piece sideways on a game board and rises, shouting out in victory. The tiefling sitting across from the devil moans as guards drag him into one of the buildings.

If the characters attempt to intervene, remind them it is important not to draw attention to themselves and that everyone participating in these games has chosen to do so. They may participate in the games themselves—feel free to have them fight against various devils and creatures of the Nine Hells. Or they can participate in games of skill or intelligence (use the Chosen One section below as guidelines). The prize for victory is 1 *Soul Coin*. The cost of failure is either death in the arena, or in the case of more civilized competitions, an hour of torture in the shacks (resulting in that character gaining one level of exhaustion).

The Phylactery of the Chosen One. If a character has selected the sin of pride, their phylactery is here. They see their soul competing in various arena games and constantly losing. As they approach each contest they do so with sunken shoulders and a worried frown. When they lose, they're mocked and punished. And they always lose.

The character may tap in and take their soul's place. They must compete in the following three challenges:

Test of Strength. The character must fight a **chain devil**.

Test of Skill. The character must either best a **horned devil** in a complicated game of knot tying or compete against an **erinyes** to see who can calm an enraged **hellcat** (see appendix B). Tying the knot requires a successful DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check whereas taming the creature requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. If the character fails the check, they can try to make a DC 16 Charisma (Deception) check. If successful they bluff their way into getting a second (and final) chance on the original check.

Test of Wits. The character challenges an **amnizu** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) to a dice game popular in the Nine Hells. The character must make a successful DC 15 Intelligence check to win the match.

When a character loses a challenge, they gain a level of exhaustion. If the character rests or otherwise recovers from that exhaustion, they must start all three matches over. They may repeat each challenge as often as needed to win but can have no help from anyone. Once they win all three matches, a succubus or incubus appears and hands them their phylactery.

A2: NEOGI SHOP

One of the shops in the Outer Agora is run by the enigmatic and ruthless **neogi** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*). These spider-like monsters are planar travelers that trade in magic items and prisoners. Their shop usually only stays in the same place for 1d6 weeks. Each visit to the shop brings the chance

ILLUSORY ITEMS

Magic Item	If Illusory	Cost
<i>Apparatus of Kwalish</i>	A hook horror charmed by the neogi	100,000 gp
<i>Brazier of Commanding Fire Elementals</i>	An xorn restrained by <i>Dimensional Shackles</i>	10,000 gp
<i>Cape of the Mountebank</i>	A rotting nonmagical cloak	5,000 gp
<i>Carpet of Flying</i>	A cheap carpet	20,000 gp
<i>Cloak of Arachnida</i>	A cloaker that is the pet of one of the neogi	15,000 gp
<i>Deck of Illusions</i>	A set of playing cards with depraved images	400 gp
<i>Demon Armor</i>	Hezrou restrained by <i>Iron Bands of Binding</i>	40,000 gp
<i>Dwarven Plate</i>	A shield guardian whose control amulet is worn by the neogi master	35,000 gp
<i>Figurine of Wondrous Power</i> (golden lions)	Same as above except a pair of hellcats (see appendix B)	11,500 gp
<i>Figurine of Wondrous Power</i> (marble elephant)	Same as above except a single maelephant nomad (see appendix B)	11,000 gp
<i>Figurine of Wondrous Power</i> (onyx dog)	Displacer fiend (see appendix B) under permanent <i>Reduce</i> spell and held by an adamantine leash	11,000 gp
<i>Helm of Brilliance</i>	Intellect devourer	25,000 gp
<i>Mace of Terror</i>	A flameskull attached to an <i>Immovable Rod</i>	9,000 gp
<i>Sword of Life Stealing</i>	A rusty nonmagical sword	12,000 gp
<i>Wings of Flying</i>	Muzzled harpy in a cage	11,000 gp

of danger, for sometimes the neogi aren't looking to sell items, but are more interested in acquiring new victims. A new shopper must make a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If they succeed, the items on sale are real. If they fail, then the items are illusory and the neogi have prepared an ambush. A **neogi master** leads the ambush, with an additional **neogi** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) and an **umber hulk** for each shopper. More powerful customers might mean the neogi bring an additional 1d6 **gray renders** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*). The Illusory Items table lists items that they sell, along with what the items really are if the neogi have decided to ambush the shoppers.

THE INNER AGORA LOCATIONS

Beyond the mean skirt of barter and desperation can be found more magnificent emporia, two and three-story vessels moored in a hierarchy jealously maintained by the stallholders. There are grand platforms where demonstrations of very particular skills can be performed. Each auction house sells a specific brand of the unspeakable.

This is the Agora most visitors know, and it throngs with outsiders whose villainy, while it can't approach that of the devils themselves, nevertheless marks them out in their homes as exceptional. The Agora of Floating Knives is most famed as the center of the Nine Hells' murder trade. The four most popular destinations include the Barges of Theater, Market of Killers, Market of Victims and Orishada's palace.

A3: BARGES OF THEATER

A host of hideous entertainments are visible for the delectation of the casual visitor, carried past on boats and as advertisements at the doors of various establishments. Street torturers ply their trade to the laughter and applause of discerning crowds in much the same way as acrobats or stage magicians might in a less cursed city.

Some of the horrors that a visitor might come across include:

- An archery competition where contestants permanently snuff out souls by shooting at writhing larvae pinned to a target board.
- A still living Red Wizard whose body has been transformed into a teleportation circle.
- A musical instrument where each key drives a skewer into the flesh of some poor mortal whose throat has been twisted to utter one note of perfect pitch. This last venue is run by a tiefling named Gazrak.

Woe betide any visitor who shows distress at such theatre. With the Agora being so readily accessible, Orishada keeps a watching legion of **imps** haunting the rooftops like pigeons, watching for any intruders who lack the appropriate immoral fiber. Those who do are followed by the imps until a squad of four **bone devils** arrive to exterminate them.

Conclave (Bard)—Instrument of the Bards
(Ollamh Harp). Gazrak (chaotic evil, tiefling archmage) sells all manner of grotesque musical

instruments, but he also owns an *Instrument of the Bards* (Ollamh Harp). He is fond of the harp but also greedy. He suggests an outrageous price at first—30 *Soul Coins*. A successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check can either lower the price to 20 *Soul Coins* or allow the characters to pay 100,000 gp instead of using *Soul Coins*. Giving him a rare or very rare magic item as part of the exchange reduces the price by half.

A4: THE MARKET OF KILLERS

Ahead of you is a crowded barge that criers announce in a dozen languages as the Market of Killers. Living killers from across the planes have flocked here seeking the highest fees. Devils tout dead killers, infamous in their lifetimes, but who are allowed back into the realms of the living for one more murderous job ... at the right price. Crowded and frenetic auctions are held every hour, with the prize being a victim of the winner's choice killed via some particularly grotesque trademark method.

In the Agora, perhaps the most mundane commodity one can hire at the Agora is the service of assassins. The characters can hire a killer to perform a single kill, not as some sort of retainer. If the characters are willing to spend enough, they might be able to use one of these assassins to rid the multiverse of a villain that they met during this adventure (or a previous adventure). You decide whether the assassin succeeds. A failed attempt might mean that the target turns the tables and sends an assassin against the characters.

Conclave (Rogue)—Cloak of Invisibility. To obtain the cloak the characters must hire the assassin (neutral evil, lizardfolk **assassin**) who wears it, and then kill them for it. When they threaten the assassin he mocks them because he is protected by a powerful archdevil.

The assassin hisses at you. “Lay down your arms and move on, for know this: my patron is powerful and appreciates my special skills. They will be displeased if you strike out against me.” The lizardfolk grins a toothy grin and slips the hood of the cloak overhead.

They're still willing to assassinate an individual for the characters or meet them at a later date. If the characters do kill the assassin, they draw the ire of an archdevil (your choice), who makes the remainder of their adventures in the Nine Hells more dangerous. To avoid this, characters must purchase a dispensation from Orishada prior to killing the

ASSASSINS FOR HIRE

Killer	Cost	CR/Level that they can kill
Thug	100 gp	1
Gladiator	250 gp	3
Assassin	500 gp	5
Undead drow mage* who summons a bone devil instead of a shadow demon	750 gp	6
Undead assassin*	1,000 gp	7
Undead githyanki knight* on a young shadow dragon (red)	1,500 gp	8
The yat-ja slayer (lizardfolk assassin with a <i>Cloak of Invisibility</i>)	5,000 gp	9
Saint of killers (fallen planetary with no wings or fly speed, dressed in dark leather)	20,000 gp	12

*These Undead creatures have resistance to Acid, Cold, Fire, Lightning, Necrotic, Thunder damage; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. They're immune to the following conditions: Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained. They have the following trait:

Incorporeal Movement. The killer moves through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. The killer takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

assassin. See the “Floating Duke” section. The dispensation costs 8,000 gp.

A5: THE MARKET OF VICTIMS

Across from the barbarity that is the Market of Killers, there is the Market of Victims. Not a commodity you'd think would be in short supply in the Nine Hells, but there are victims and then there are victims. Each seller claims to cater to a very specific criteria of victim—a particular bloodline, a type of virtue, saints, angels, demons, emperors, and more.

The kidnappers of the Nine Hells have contacts in every plane, on every world. They offer a comprehensive service. Many a high priest of some bloody god or other has procured the perfect sacrifice by sending their acolytes to the Agora with sufficient largesse.

Phylactery of the Bounty. The character seeking the phylactery that contains the soul of their bounty—the matron of a powerful noble family—is drawn to this location. They immediately notice a secluded corner of the market where an **affliction**





DEVILS DISPLAY THEIR NASTY
TRICKS TO AN ADMIRING CROWD.

devil (see appendix B) haggles with two **barbed devils**. One barbed devil clutches a bulging leather satchel. The character realizes the phylactery they seek is in the satchel. If they don't intervene the affliction devil soon takes the satchel and flies away.

Instead, if the character interrupts, they can offer to buy the satchel. This negotiation requires a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If successful, the character manages to outbid the affliction devil and can purchase the satchel for 5,000 gp. If the result of the check is 20 or higher, the character's negotiation skills are insurmountable, and the affliction devil leaves negotiations earlier. The character only needs to pay 3,000 gp to purchase the satchel. Once the satchel is obtained, the character takes possession of this phylactery and receives the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

A6: ORISHADA'S PALACE

The palace at the center of the Agora is a vast leviathan of pumice and incandescent metal lit on the outside by some gruesome burning substance. Its walls bristling with a million barbed hooks, the only easy way in seems to be the massive double doors at its front.

Orishada and his select underlings offer unique services, both to the Nine Hells and to outsiders. They're proud of their range, in fact—enough that at least affecting to be a connoisseur of such things can win one an audience.

AN AUDIENCE WITH AELVETTE

Using the iron knocker summons an **imp** that opens a slot just below. The imp promptly demands to know what valid business justifies the interruption. As long as a visitor describes the desire to purchase something that Orishada provides, then the imp permits them to meet with the majordomo of the palace.

Orishada's majordomo is Aelvette, an ancient **night hag** whose past has taken her in and out of the lower planes for longer than even most devils can recall. She has complete control of her appearance, able to decide for each viewer whether she should appear as alluring or hideous at any given moment. Her particular game is the *Condensed Order* trade; the silvery powder, highly valuable to devils, that can be extracted from those of a lawful persuasion.

Aelvette is sly, humorous and doesn't play by the rules in the way true devils do, which can make her either the best or absolutely the worst person to approach at the palace. The night hag attempts to discern if any of her guests are of an appropriate mindset to consent to have the *Condensed Powder*

extracted, for a fair price. If she doesn't think this is likely, then she offers to play a game of chess or other logical exercise from an appropriate visitor. If the visitor agrees and loses the game, then this yields a gleaming phial of *Condensed Order* for Aelvette, but leaves the unwilling donor confused and off-balance (akin to the poisoned condition). The condition lasts for 5 minutes.

Playing Aelvette. The characters find themselves in a battle of wits with Aelvette. Either they have to impress her during a conversation in which she is testing their mettle, or they have to (try and) beat her at chess. The character with the highest Intelligence score should challenge Aelvette. Defeating the hag at chess or impressing her during conversation requires three successful Intelligence checks. The DC is 10 on the first check, 15 on the second check, and 20 on the third check. A character who has proficiency in the Insight skill can add their proficiency bonus to each of these checks.

Once Aelvette has finished plying her trade in powder, she informs her guests that her master, Orishada, wishes to see them. Before they meet with him, the night hag suggests that they partake of the services provided at the kitchens or the salon.

Conclave (Ranger)—The Iron Horn of Valhalla. Aelvette is in possession of the *Iron Horn of Valhalla*, a character searching for it has to steal it from her. When the characters enter Aelvette's chambers read the following:

You are ushered into a large, oval room by the imp. It quickly scurries away leaving you alone with the figure at the center of the room. Behind her, the floor to ceiling windows overlooking the Agora are opened, allowing the smoke and stench of the city to penetrate the air. The sparsely furnished room is dominated by a large stone table. On it a weathered chessboard is set up, the pieces positioned in what appears to be a game in progress. Aelvette, the majordomo, stands beside the table, studying the game set up before her. She appears deep in thought and doesn't pay you any attention. Your attention is drawn to a magic horn mounted on the wall behind her ...

This is the *Iron Horn of Valhalla*. The characters need to distract Aelvette to steal it. The most opportune moment would be when her mind is elsewhere engaged. Most likely, the characters will opt to have one of them move on the horn while she is playing chess with another character. Some characters might want to stage a different distraction. Whatever scenario they choose, a character stealing the horn needs to succeed on a DC 16



THE MOST PERVERSE DELICACIES ARE
PREPARED IN AELVETTE'S KITCHENS.

Dexterity (Stealth) check. If they fail, she notices the character creeping behind her and attacks—unless the character manages to convince her their intention was not to steal.

THE KITCHENS

This massive kitchen contains sights and smells only a devil, or one interested in the macabre, could enjoy. Hulking chefs, whose limbs seem stitched together, shuffle about preparing meals as a devil directs them.

In addition to managing the important business conducted in the palace, the majordomo, Aelvette, also presides over the devil chefs of the palace's famous Omnivorous Kitchen, an appalling side-business of hers known to the jaded and wicked across the planes. Who, after all, knows the best way to prepare just about any meat, to appeal to any palate, but a hag? Those who wish to sample the most forbidden delicacies flock to the palace, as do those who would learn the ghastliest recipes and culinary techniques across the multiverse. Not for the faint of heart or the weak of stomach.

If their appetite is overpowering their morals, the characters may choose to order one of the delicacies from Aelvette's kitchen. Prices are listed on the Forbidden Delicacies table.

FORBIDDEN DELICACIES

Meal	Cost
Boiled shank of minotaur	25 gp
Candied spider eyes	3 gp
Live owlbear	1,000 gp
Lobe of grell	12 gp
Poached stirge eggs	1 gp
Prime cut of pegasus	100 gp
Roasted jackalwere	10 gp
Toasted salamander	15 gp

The chefs working the kitchen are three **flesh golems** directed by a **horned devil**. Any violence in the kitchens brings down the wrath of all the chefs and their overseer.

The Phylactery of Patricide. A character who has chosen the patricide sin discovers that one of the flesh golems is being whipped by the horned devil for failing to follow a recipe in the correct manner. Read the following to that character:

You realize the flesh golem's likeness is identical to yours and in the devil's face you see your own father's features reflected. A terrible sense of familiarity comes over you, reminding you of the dreams that have long been haunting you.

The character must end this cycle of torment to gain their phylactery. The moment they attack the horned devil however, all the flesh golems, including the one in whom the character sees their own likeness, defend the vile creature.

Once the golems and the devil are slain, read the following:

The abused flesh golem looks up at you from where it has fallen. Then its flesh begins to bubble and hiss, dissolving away, leaving behind a terrible stench and a tarnished phylactery that remains warm to the touch.

The player has recovered their soul's phylactery.

CORTESO'S SALON OF EXPERIENCE

Tiny brains with legs run about this room that has been designated as a 'salon of experience'. Behind a thick glass window, you see a pool that contains a massive pulsating brain.

Corteso's Salon of Experience is another peculiar service offered at the palace. Many devils have an infinite curiosity about what it is to be mortal. The illithid **elder brain** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) Corteso has accumulated a vast library of memories—specializing in experiences of sin and being sinned against. As well as counting for high entertainment to devils, students from the college of Maladomini flock here to refine their education on how to live among and manipulate mortals. Corteso

TEMPTATION OF HARM

"Carved in Flesh"

One of the butchering knives, currently ensconced in a hunk of meat, appears larger and somehow more ominous than the others. It can be retrieved without alerting the golems and devil with a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. The characters now have the *Knife of Stolen Resistance* (see appendix D).

is always in the market for a truly unique experience, and always has something to offer in trade. Its illithid spawn have been known to ensure that its offers can't easily be refused. Corteso's other racket is secrets.

The multitude of minds that it and its many broods have consumed grant the ancient intellect a vast storehouse of dangerous knowledge. Buyers come to learn exactly what they need to say, and to whom, to have some other murdered without getting their own hands dirty. Corteso specializes in jealous lovers, swindled business partners, ancient family feuds, anything that sows discord and inflames hatreds between mortals. Just what brought such a creature as Corteso to the palace and Orishada's patronage is a secret nobody knows, certainly one the creature has no intention of selling. Rumor has it Corteso created and then survived the destruction of multiple broods, evaded the attempts of many heroes to end its prolonged existence, and fled to the Nine Hells pursued by gith assassins and the agents of other elder brains which it had betrayed. Innately treacherous, it is 'loyal' to Orishada because only in the archdevil's shadow is it safe.

Corteso is always protected by a half-dozen **mind flayers** and their **intellect devourer** pets. If asked where he obtains his memories, the characters are told their suppliers are many, but recently high-quality memories have been obtained from a location known as the Ineffable Trove, located in Minauros.

THE FLOATING DUKE

Orishada is a great, broad devil wearing clothes of metallic finery, richly bedecked in both mundane and exotic jewelry. "I hope you're not here to waste my time. My direct superior is Dispater himself, lord of both city and layer, and he will be gracing me with his presence in a few hours. I see only very select buyers, which my majordomo assures me you are. I must assume you're here for the specific class of ware that I am known for: dispensations."

If his guests have no idea what he is talking about, Orishada—an **amnizu** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*)—won't immediately order their deaths. He assumes it is part of some negotiation tactic. He summons one of his **imps** to explain what a dispensation is:

"In the fine print of many an infernal contract there is a little clause almost never exercised. It's a 'boilerplate' clause that when exercised, gives an ironclad permission for the contract holder, their heirs or assigns, or any descendant or inheritor, to be murdered, without penalty or retribution. Such clauses have been around for many thousands of years, and my master, Orishada, makes it his business to collect them, or knowledge of them."

After the imp has finished, Orishada inquires as to whose dispensation they wish to purchase.

Given their multigenerational nature, a remarkable number of great and powerful people are covered by such clauses without ever knowing it. The dispensations that Orishada sells don't procure the death of the victim—that's what the rest of the Agora is for, after all. However, they do permit an assassin to disregard a variety of defenses up to and including divine favor, and protect the killer from curses, supernatural wrath, and other problematic fallout after murdering someone particularly important.

There is a 50 percent chance that any named evil creature/NPC is covered by a dispensation. This drops to 10 percent for good and neutral NPCs. A good rule of thumb is to have a dispensation cost $1000 \times$ the creature/NPC's challenge rating in gold pieces.

If his guests decline to purchase a dispensation or they're impolite or violent, Orishada becomes enraged and orders his personal guard to liquidate the intruders. These include a quartet of **horned devils** and a half dozen **bone devils**.

Orishada won't join in the slaughter, not because he doesn't want to, but because he can't. Orishada was a talented killer whose thousand-year career would raise the eyebrows of every assassin thronging the boats of the Agora. He finally allowed his bloodthirstiness to overcome his proper place, however, encompassing the death of one beloved to certain divine powers. In punishment, Orishada now lives out his endless life under a bitter curse. He can no longer inflict physical harm himself, not on the least insect, not even to a mortal. Because of this he uses his magic to aid his guards as best he can but won't intentionally cause damage.

INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS

All the devils at this location defend either **Dispater** (see appendix A) or Orishada if the characters attack either. It is unlikely characters can survive an outright onslaught and they may need some guidance to behave as cleverly as the devils themselves do in the Nine Hells. Dealing with just Orishada on his own is significantly easier.

Deathstalkers—Obtaining the Wrought-Iron Tower

Tower. Dispater is due to visit Orishada in a few hours. While extremely difficult, a particularly ingenious group of characters might be able to steal Dispater's *Wrought-Iron Tower* (this is the staff that is his signet) through deception (though illusions won't work) or by simply snatching it and running for their lives. However, they can also learn from Orishada, who is a braggart, that Dispater must leave his *Wrought-Iron Tower* with Orishada before he goes to an audience with Asmodeus. He can't bring his symbol of power when he goes before his master, and he doesn't trust to leave it with someone at his abode; thus, he often leaves it in Orishada's care.

If the characters express disbelief that Orishada could safely care for such a powerful item, the devil bristles at the offense. He shows off the special chest he has had constructed to safeguard the artifact. The adamantine chest is built into the floor itself and hence unmovable and protected with a magical lock that requires a code writ in glyphs to be entered successfully, in sequence. Each failure results in a loud boom heard up to a mile away (surely drawing any guards' attention) and a devious trap. Each creature within 30 feet of the chest when the trap is triggered must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw. A failed save results in 36 (8d8) damage of a type that the creature is vulnerable to (necrotic damage if the creature has no vulnerability). Succeeding on the saving throw results in the damage being halved.

A successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check can convince Orishada to open the magnificent chest and when he does so a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to notice the combination required to unlock it.



THE BLACK DRAGON ILFRICH CIRCLES ABOVE HIS LAIR.

CHAPTER 5

Minauros, the Endless Swamp



ERAPS THE MOST DISGUSTING OF THE layers, Minauros, the third layer of the Nine Hells, is an unending bog filled with ruins and plagued by insects and disease. Countless structures, creatures, and vegetation have sunk under the pull of the bog, just to be replaced shortly after.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Minauros Overview” section. It provides you with the information you need to set the scene for your players during their adventures in Minauros and guide them towards the Ineffable Trove.

ENCOUNTERS

The journey into Minauros is treacherous and navigating the Styx is difficult. Remember to roll on the River Styx Encounters table in chapter 2, for each day they travel those waters. Even once the characters have solid ground under their feet, the Nine Hells offers them no respite. After they leave the ship and make their way inland, roll at least once on the Random Encounters in Minauros table.

LOCATIONS

When the characters leave the barge to venture into Minauros have Koh Tam provide information about the different locations found here. Descriptions can be found in the “Key Locations in Minauros” section. If the players decide to venture into any of these areas, you can use the information provided in this section to guide them on a short excursion.

TIAX

Where Tiax was quick to offer his services as a guide at the Agora in Dis, here he seems more reluctant. When the characters ask him to accompany them, he becomes irritable. He tells them, “Tiax is busy with his important work. Now go away!” If pressed, he draws the characters a crude map that is of no use. He thrusts it into the hands of the character standing closest to him before stomping off to the lower decks in a huff. He refuses to come out again until the ship is on its way to another layer of the Nine Hells. Tiax has had dealings in the past with a strange and powerful being living in the Ineffable Trove known as Grinken Eyre. He believes he still owes Grinken Eyre a favor and wants to avoid payment, but Tiax is mistaken. It is Grinken Eyre who owes Tiax the favor.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN MINAUROS

d6 Encounter

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | An envoy of four chain devils from Jangling Hiter passes the characters on its way to negotiate with devils from Minauros. They carry 8,000 gp to be used in those negotiations. |
| 2 | A convoy of a dozen lemures are under attack by a flock of four shredwings (see appendix B) looking for food. |
| 3 | An elite group of ten bearded devils is returning from a scavenging trip within a nearby ruin, possibly with spoils to bring to Mammon. If they defeat the devils, the characters can claim 5,000 gp in gems and other valuables. |
| 4 | 1d4 ayperobo swarms (see appendix B) wander through the swamp, looking for victims. They descend on anything with blood. |
| 5 | A group of five barbed devils , have been tasked with cutting down a section of the swamp in preparation for new construction. |
| 6 | A deadly hailstorm appears, centered on one of the characters. The storm is 300 feet in radius and any creature who starts their turn in the storm, must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 33 (6d10) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage. The storm moves 10 feet in a random direction on initiative count 15 of each round and lasts for 10 rounds. |

OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your player’s objectives and lead them to the corresponding areas to ensure they can complete their goals.

The following objectives can be attained in Minauros:

OBJECTIVES IN MINAUROS

Objective	Location
<i>Belt of Giant Strength</i> (storm)	The Ineffable Trove: Thelekarna's Roost
<i>Accounting and Valuation of All Things</i>	The Ineffable Trove: Klassk's Lair
<i>Phylactery of the infinite treasure</i>	The Ineffable Trove: The Grinken Eyre
<i>Phylactery of the father</i>	The Ineffable Trove: The Grinken Eyre

THE GROUP PATRON

If the characters have completed most of their objectives, or are close to doing so, review the “A Thankful Patron” section in chapter 10. The characters eventually need to travel to Cania to complete their patron’s quest.

TEMPTATIONS

Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Minauros. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

MINAUROS OVERVIEW

Named for its capital city of the same name, Minauros is kept standing through constant shoring efforts. The swamp provides a good source of raw materials, including vegetation, lumber, stone, and water, which Mammon occasionally exports to other layers in exchange for wealth. Jangling Hiter, the home of the chain devils, also lies in this realm, suspended on chains attached to the bottom of Dis.

Entering the realm on a series of artificial channels the Styx’s stretch into Minauros is one of the most dangerous sections of the river. Closing the massive distance between the ceiling of the cave

and the bog below, the river turns into cascading waterfalls and severe rapids, eventually falling almost 200 feet into a small pool in the swamp. From here, it winds through the bog to a hot corner of the layer and into an extinct volcano. Inside the caldera is a whirlpool, which dumps into Phlegethos below. For the inexperienced, knowing where the swamp ends and the Styx begins is extremely difficult, and more than a few inhabitants end up walking right into the deadly river, drowning as their memories depart.

Although the swamp itself could prove dangerous, native inhabitants to the layer feel their realm is perhaps the most magnificent. Indeed, it contains vegetation, animal life, and differing pockets of temperature, all features largely unique to Minauros. The entire layer is lit by a bioluminescent fog excreted from the trees, which some devils even describe as beautiful. However, the weather helps temper expectations. Minauros experiences gale-force winds almost constantly, which carry with them the stench of death. Precipitation of some form is constant, with rain and sleet leaving behind an oily slime that covers everything. The occasional hailstorms are extremely dangerous, with pieces of hail falling like thrown daggers.





MINAUROS IS DANGEROUS,

BUT TREASURE LIES WITHIN ITS SWAMPY WATERS.

Despite being known as the layer of bogs, Minauros is more than just swamp. Outcroppings of volcanic stone, flooded volcanos, and crystalline obsidian are all scattered throughout the layer. Ancient cities, half-sunk underneath the bog, contain hidden treasures or small communities. Perhaps due to Mammon's obsession with wealth over duty, Minauros is the plane containing the most wayward and lost souls.

The most important places within the layer are the namesake city of Minauros and the kyton city of Jangling Hiter. A few deities have realms within the layer, but they largely keep to themselves and avoid trade with the devils.

Mammon rules over the inhabitants of the layer with greed and fleeting interest. Those native to the layer have learned to work around Mammon's avarice, including the many conscripts tasked with keeping Minauros above the bog.

LEAVING MINAUROS

Travel from Minauros to the lower layers is relatively easy, assuming one can appeal to the native creatures. Navigating the Styx only requires an understanding of the swamp, and even new captains can sometimes find their way. If one can

gain entry into Jangling Hiter, the kytons maintain a passageway between layers, and aren't stingy about its use. Last and perhaps most dangerous are the mud geysers found in the hotter parts of the bog. They create a wreathing passage directly into Phlegethos, though the path is often blocked by strange creatures, molten mud, tight passages, and heat vents.

FEATURES

Toxicity flows from the swamps of Minauros into the air, and spreads throughout the entire layer. Whenever a creature finishes a long rest while on this plane, they have the poisoned condition. The condition lasts for 24 hours or until cured.

In addition to the pervasive toxicity, Minauros also smothers visitors with an aura of sickness. Any healing a creature receives, either natural or magical, is halved (rounded down) while in this layer. Creatures immune to disease are immune to this effect. A *Protection from Good and Evil* spell or similar effect restores healing functionality for its duration.

KEY LOCATIONS IN MINAUROS

Some of the major locations found in Minauros are described below.

THE CITY OF MINAUROS

Minauros is known as the sinking city, and while not as large as some of the other capitals, is still a massive complex. A small layer of water covers the lowest parts of the city, sometimes rising as high as five feet. The entire city is covered in a thin layer of oily slime. Though the city's economy is driven primarily by the soul trade, there are some opportunities for other sorts of transactions.

TEMPTATION OF DECEIT

"The Lookalike"

The characters are approached by a suave **corruption devil** (see appendix B), followed by a masked figure.

The devil stands beneath a canopy, protecting him from the pervasive hail that seems to be this layer's predominate weather feature. "Travelers! Might I offer you the services of my esteemed colleague? They're so very skilled in the art of disguise. A simple enough matter for them to impersonate an enemy of yours, perhaps?"

If the characters pay 1000 gp, they can secure the services of a **doppelganger**. Review the appropriate temptation event in chapter 2 for more details.

JANGLING HITER

Jangling Hiter is quite the sight, as the city is suspended above the swamp by thick chains. It provides little protection against the weather, leaving a thick layer of rust hidden underneath the slime. Unlike other layers' hierarchies, Jangling Hiter is completely independent from the current ruler of Minauros, instead being ruled by **chain devils** (the kytons). These devils are known for being skilled torturers, and their services are made use of by the Lords of the Nine themselves.

Characters are wise to keep silent about any outrage they feel regarding the torments they may observe within Jangling Hiter. After two hours of exploring the city, any non-evil character must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw. If they fail, their discomfort and horror is noticed by 2d4 **barbed devils**, who approach the character to mock them. Characters have to bluff to avoid a fight with this group of devils by succeeding on a DC 14 Charisma (Deception) check.

TEMPTATION OF PRIDE

"You Must Speak Up"

While wandering the streets, the characters come across a **chain devil** carving tattoos into the skin of paying visitors. If asked, the devil explains that their tattoos grant the recipient magical knowledge. If a character is willing to pay 2 **Soul Coins** or 300 gp for this tattoo, then review the appropriate temptation event in chapter 2.

THE INEFFABLE TROVE

The Ineffable Trove is a massive swamp that is used as a garbage pit. The garbage consists of emotions, memories, and fragments of personality that mortals have bargained with devils to be rid of. Off-putting as that may sound, the characters must venture deep within the trove if they want to complete their quest.

ADVENTURE: THE INEFFABLE TROVE

Arguably least lovely of all the Nine Hells—a coveted title—Minauros' bleak, stinking swamps are blasted by a constant gale that fails to dispel the curtains of noxious, phosphorescent fog. Ground, water, and air are treacherous and toxic. That the place is riotous with a hideous twisted life is no great recommendation. Around the Trove, however, the usual tribulations of the place are combined with an unsettling babble, in the ears and in the mind. Feral emotions creep into unwary minds like parasites, slowly growing within them until an alien feeling without cause or logic consumes the victim to the point of obsession. The bark of the bog's trees is knotted into half-formed faces as the concentration of pillaged mortal sensation strives to express itself.

Unsurprisingly, Mammon and his underlings never much considered the effects of dumping so much raw qualia into one place. The curdled sensations and qualities have leached out into the surrounding regions, imbuing the waters, plants, and denizens of the Trove with unpredictable qualities. Orphaned emotions, vices, and virtues throng the place like invisible swarms of insects, infesting everything and everyone.

Despite this, scavengers and treasure hunters still go there. What Mammon has discarded yet has value to certain markets. It seems surprising that the Lord of Greed tolerates such pilfering, but the archdevil knows that the result of dealing in such commodities will only be a net increase in misery and wickedness.

What could possibly lure the greedy and incautious to the Trove? Across the many worlds there are certainly connoisseurs of sensation, those of wealth and power whose lives are devoid of thrill and the heights of emotion. Appropriate equipment can isolate the most select cuts of anguish and love

THE INEFFABLE TROVE



and fear in the Trove, to be distilled and sold to the jaded for a healthy profit.

The raw emotional mélange of the Trove is a delicacy to some illithids—not nourishing in any real way but the mental equivalent of a sugary pastry, valuable in trade to those bold and amoral enough to deal with the creatures.

If the characters express the desire to visit the Ineffable Trove, Koh Tam describes it to them:

"Mammon takes the most glee when mortals believe, at the outset, that they trade something worthless for a great treasure, only to discover they have given away a thing they can never replace. Often, the prices of these deals are nothing physical. Perhaps you would rather be without that crushing sense of guilt that attended any unworthy act? The duty that restricts you; that humility which prevents you seizing your destiny? Mammon's favorite bargains are those where the truly valuable thing is what the mortal will pay to have cut away." He pauses. "While one might think these nebulous qualities would just blow away in the howling gales of Minauros, that's not how the Nine Hells work. Everything received under infernal contract must have a presence within the Nine Planes. Once Mammon and his underlings take these qualities, they assume a tenuous reality."

"Those mortals who go on with their lives shorn of guilt, shame, or restraint may think they're purchasing freedom—but Mammon knows that they will do far more evil, and imperil far more souls, than if they were still inhibited by those inner gatekeepers judging their actions." He stares hard at you. "The fragments of personality Mammon clips are of no particular interest to him after he has them, but concentrations of such stuff can have unfortunate effects even on the denizens of the Nine Hells. It can be tiresome to have the severed guilt of a thousand humans bleeding into your treasury and making the imps weepy. Instead, it gets dumped out into the limitless swamps of Minauros. One tangle of glades in particular has been a receptacle of these intangible qualities since time immemorial. This is the Ineffable Trove, and it has become a troubled and uncanny place even for the Nine Hells. And of course, troubled and uncanny places are what we seek, are they not?"

He explains that devils are renowned for their crooked deals, none more so than Mammon. The Patron of Greed knows the hearts of mortals better than any devil save Asmodeus, and over his long reign he has rooked endless mortals out of what they most value, in exchange for mere trash.

ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam's advice to the characters is as follows:

- They're likely to find what they're looking for in the lair of one of the swamp's apex predators.
- They should be careful about resting in the swamp. The memories and emotions can twist the mind of a mortal.

Koh Tam gives them an infernal map. Show the players the map of the Ineffable Trove in appendix F. They can use this map to decide which points of interest they want to explore. Refer to the "Using an Infernal Map" section of chapter 2. A failed or successful Wisdom (Survival) check to use this map has a 50 percent chance of triggering an encounter on the Random Encounters in the Ineffable Trove table.

DREAMING DANGEROUSLY

A visit to the Trove is perilous. A host of wild, predatory emotions infest the place like mosquitos. An unprepared visitor can come away with a mind full of unwanted urges and contradictory drives fit to whip them to distraction. These dangerous infestations are concentrated in several dreaming pools, located throughout the Trove.

Each time the characters encounter a dreaming pool (marked with an 'X' on the map) that has not yet been harvested, they begin to feel drowsy and dreamy. Read the following:

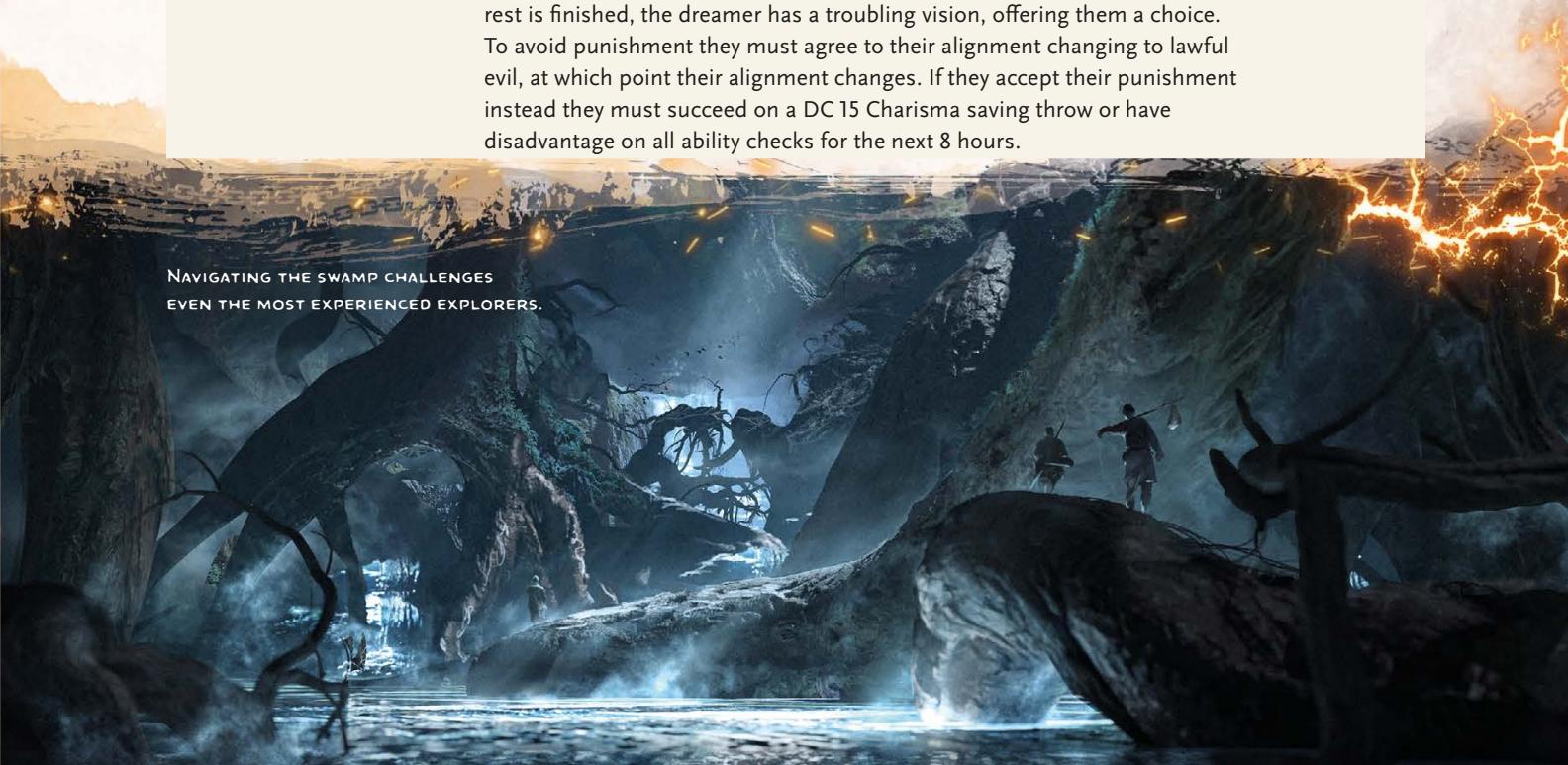
A thousand fragmentary voices bubble up through the filthy water and hang about the branches of the gnarled trees along with the creepers and moss. Wails and chattering, wild laughter, screaming and begging echo back and forth, incoherent, and piecemeal. Sensations wash across you in waves, overwhelming you with brief moments of grief or joy. The pools and hollows around you begin to glow with nameless colors.

At this point a character can willingly choose to enter the dream realm of the Ineffable Trove, or they can succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw to pull out of the waking dream. While in the dream realm they see memories, emotions and personality traits that might be of interest to them. Roll 1d4+2—this is the number of these available in this dreaming pool. For each, roll on the Dreaming Pool Traits table to determine its type, rerolling duplicates. Describe these to the characters without hinting whether they're negative or positive experiences. Characters may then use an action to graft one of these experiences to their own mind. However, the other memories, emotions, and traits desire attachment to the characters whether they

DREAMING POOL TRAITS

d12	Psychological Trait	Effect	Corteso's Value
1	Benevolence (Emotion)	If the dreamer touches a creature that has less than its maximum hit points, that creature regains 30 hit points. The dreamer must finish a long rest before using this ability again.	500 gp
2	Charitable (Trait)	The dreamer must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or renounce wealth for a month. They give away any coins, gems, or jewelry that they possess.	500 gp
3	Greed (Trait)	For the next month the dreamer must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw whenever they discover coins, gems, or jewelry. On a failed save they try to take all of it for themselves.	1,000 gp
4	Guilt (Emotion)	For the next month, the character must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw each time they reduce another creature to 0 hit points. On a failed save, the character has disadvantage on attack rolls for 1 hour.	2,500 gp
5	Humility (Trait)	Whenever another creature makes an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw within 30 feet of the dreamer, the dreamer may use a reaction to make that creature reroll that attack, check, or saving throw. The dreamer can do this a number of times per day equal to their proficiency bonus. This feature disappears after one month.	500 gp
6	Love (Emotion)	The dreamer is granted the power to teleport directly to the location of the phylactery of their loved one. They can take up to 8 others with them, but must teleport before they take a long rest or they lose this feature.	500 gp
7	Memory of a Bloody Battle	The dreamer deals an additional 2 (1d4) necrotic damage when they hit a creature with any melee or ranged attack. This lasts for 1 week.	1,000 gp
8	Memory of a Celebration	The dreamer remembers a great achievement for which they were praised. The dreamer comes under the effect of a <i>Bless</i> spell for 1 week.	2,500 gp
9	Memory of a Tragic Family Event	At the end of each long rest, the dreamer must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save they feel morose for 8 hours and have disadvantage on Charisma and Wisdom saving throws. After 1 week, the dreamer no longer needs to make this saving throw.	2,500 gp
10	Memory of Dying	At the end of each successful long rest, the <i>Death Ward</i> spell is cast on the dreamer.	5,000 gp
11	Narcissism (Trait)	For the next month, each time the dreamer attempts to cast a beneficial spell on an ally, or attempts to heal an ally, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw first. If they fail, they take the Dodge action instead.	2,500 gp
12	Psychopathy (Trait)	If the dreamer has a non-evil alignment then for 1 month, after every long rest is finished, the dreamer has a troubling vision, offering them a choice. To avoid punishment they must agree to their alignment changing to lawful evil, at which point their alignment changes. If they accept their punishment instead they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on all ability checks for the next 8 hours.	2,500 gp

NAVIGATING THE SWAMP CHALLENGES
EVEN THE MOST EXPERIENCED EXPLORERS.





CORTESO

The characters might remember Corteso from the Salon of Experience at the Agora in Dis, if not Tiax or Koh Tam can remind them. Or, if they've yet to visit the salon one of the NPCs might mention the location now.

want them to or not. Have each character who grafted a memory onto themselves make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw. If they fail, one of these leftover experiences grafts itself onto them, one per failing character (starting with the character that rolled lowest for their saving throw). Once all experiences have been taken the pool is considered harvested (no new experiences can be acquired here).

A character can have only one beneficial and one detrimental memory, emotion, or personality trait grafted to their mind at a time. If a character possesses a dream bottle, then they may use a short or long rest to transfer a single memory, emotion, or personality trait from their mind into a bottle. The elder brain, Corteso, is willing to pay for these bottled experiences (see the Dreaming Pool Traits table for the values of different trait types).

PREDATORS AND SCAVENGERS

Some hunters have less reprehensible goals in raiding the Trove. Wizards seeking to build artificial minds for their creations may send agents seeking some particular quality they wish their creation to have, that they can't generate themselves. Brilliant mortals who yet believe you can get something untainted out of the Nine Hells never cease to amuse Mammon. Finally, most tragically, there are those who have already lost some part of themselves—either because of exactly the sort of deal Mammon loves to make, or because they've been the victim of some attack or mind-draining beast. Mortals who have a hole in their natures where loyalty or love or joy once was, they come to the Trove seeking something to fill that gap. Just as a callous artificer might sew a goblin arm onto a dwarf lacking a limb, so they take up some other unfortunate's lost emotions to graft onto their own mind. Such marriages are seldom happy, but the planes are full of desperation.

The sucking mire of Minauros is no stranger to oozing, protean life, but such mindless and transient entities become something quite different in the Trove. **Black puddings** are a danger to careless travelers. The creatures abound around the Trove, sucking up and vomiting out a constantly changing

diet of thoughts and feelings. Other Oozes are simply possessed by countless babbling voices, akin to gibbering mouthers. The two classes of gelatinous creature aren't mutually exclusive, and monsters with the characteristics of both at once aren't uncommon.

Other common sights are dream eaters or **oneirovores** (see appendix B). The normally passive sloth-like monsters are drawn to the Trove from across Minauros, but the rich diet of mortal thoughts and sensation angers them—simultaneously too intense and too transitory. A further danger is a particular strain of infernal **froghemot** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) that can metabolize the Trove's seething emotions, borrowing temporary intellect to lure prey with stolen mortal cries and pleading.

Every time the characters take a short or long rest in the Ineffable Trove, roll on the following table. Then roll a d6. On a 1–3 the random encounter interrupts the rest. On a 4–6 the encounter happens a few minutes after the rest is finished.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE INEFFABLE TROVE

d8 Encounter

- 1 An **archmage** searches for different emotions to sell to the elder brain, Corteso. He has multiple dream bottles that he sells for 50 gp each.
- 2 A **knight** sobs with hopelessness, unable to find the guilt that he sacrificed.
- 3 A half dozen **gibbering mouthers** appear in the very waters that the characters traverse and a round later a dozen **black puddings** erupt all around in a carefully planned ambush.
- 4 A herd of three **oneirovores** (see appendix B) lazily eating from deformed trees go berserk with rage when they see the characters.
- 5 A duo of mutated **froghemot** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) begin to hunt the characters.
- 6 The **adult black dragon**, Ilfrich, is on the hunt for a meal. If hurt, he tries to escape to his lair and bring back Klassk to exact vengeance.
- 7 The **erinyes**, Thelekarna, flies overhead.
- 8 Grinken Eyre (see area I4) introduces himself.

IN SEARCH OF THE DISCARDED AND FORGOTTEN

Beyond this mostly mindless fauna, there are three particular powers that stalk the Trove and complicate life for visitors. Firstly, there is the combined partnership of Klassk and Ilfrich, the dragons. The erinyes Thelekarna also patrols acting as an infernal steward of these lands. And finally, there's Grinken Eyre, whom the others make sure to avoid.

When the characters arrive here, and for each hour they spend in the Trove, roll two d4s. If both

dice roll the same number and that number is even, the dragons, Klassk and Ilfrich are at Klassk's lair. If they're the same number but odd, the dragons are at Ilfrich's lair. Otherwise, each dragon is in its own lair. Cautious characters might be able to watch for a dragon to leave on its way to visit the other and sneak into an empty lair.

II: KLAASK'S LAIR

Below Avernum and the lair of Tiamat, dragons are an uncommon sight in the Nine Hells. Klassk, however, is a native, a **Styx dragon** (see appendix B) whose kind are normally found making things unpleasant for river travelers. Perhaps driven from her original home by rivals, Klassk discovered the Trove an age ago and, by ancient draconic instinct, decided that it was wealth, and that it was hers. Now she broods restlessly in her lair deep in the swamps, tormented by the understanding that her 'treasure' is something she can't hold or physically possess. Indeed, the same resilience that prevented the waters of the Styx from washing away her memories also insulates her from the effects of the Trove, meaning she can never directly enjoy what she has.

Characters searching in this area and succeeding on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check eventually find a series of burrows, half under water, where she makes her lair. If the characters swim into one cave system in particular, they emerge in a domed cavern, with a section of land just large enough for a dragon to rest.

Deathstalkers—Obtaining a Copy of the Accounting and Valuation of All Things. In any discussion with either Klassk or Ilfrich, that dragon's pride insists they mention Klassk's copy of this infamous book. It is perhaps one of the few tangible things she has in this so very intangible realm. Whether this is a true copy of Mammon's essential book for valuation of souls, or a dream-copy manifested by the qualities of the Ineffable Trove, is perhaps irrelevant. This copy at least appears to be the latest version, which is a triumph in and of itself, given the ever-shifting regulations involved with soul trading.

Recovering the copy requires either slaying the dragon or somehow convincing her to be absent from her lair for at least one hour. Alternatively, a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check and a tangible gift of a magic item, might convince her to part with it. After all, another copy is sure to eventually manifest and so she has lost nothing.

SWIMMING IN THE SWAMP

The waters here are still contaminated by the River Styx. However, given their diluted nature, the DC for the saving throw is reduced to 16 and the check to avoid being affected by the *Feeblemind* spell only needs to be made once every hour. Consult "The River Styx" section in chapter 2 for more details.

12: ILFRICH'S LAIR

A thrust of black rock juts from the murky and ever-changing bog. If the characters climb it, they discover a cave mouth, leading into a spacious system of caverns, at least a half dozen large caves, beside, above, and below one another. Ilfrich makes his home in these caves for they conveniently lead back into the swamps, allowing an easy retreat, if needed. And they make it easy for the Styx dragon to swim into this lair to visit.

A pervasive and heavy fog covers the branching cavern system. Damp moss clings to every stone outcropping. Gradually you find your way towards the largest of the chambers, a cavern half covered by a large pit of brackish water, a ledge of crumbling stone overhanging it.

Klassk is ancient and powerful and—until recently—endlessly miserable, doubtless a state of affairs Mammon knew of and greatly enjoyed. This changed with the advent of Ilfrich, an **adult black dragon** who strayed from Avernus and ended up in Minauros, injured, outclassed, and hunted. Ilfrich is more than capable of taking in the delights of the Trove in a controlled manner and has a knack for regaling Klassk in a way she can appreciate and enjoy. In return, Klassk keeps Ilfrich safe from the dangers of Minauros, and the two have become strong allies. Whilst Klassk normally reacts with a dragon's rage when she finds intruders stealing from her 'hoard', Ilfrich has been known to spare bards who teach him good, emotive songs and tales that he might entertain his protector with.

The Phylactery of the Infinite Treasure. If one of the characters is searching for this phylactery, they discover the following in Ilfrich's lair. If no character searches for this phylactery, Ilfrich doesn't have any of the special properties described below.

On the ledge of stone before you is a massive treasure pile and on the opposite side, several neat stacks of coins. A form shambles between them, carrying one coin at a time from the mound to the stack. As each coin is placed there's a clang of metal against metal reverberating through the chamber, and the form whispers a number. They appear to be counting the coins.

The character seeking their soul recognizes the coin-counter as themselves ... and is also immediately drawn to the immense wealth in the room. If Ilfrich is in his lair, he attacks, fearing that the character has come to steal his treasure. If the

TEMPTATION OF GREED

"Save it for a Rainy Day"

This temptation doesn't occur if a character comes here seeking their phylactery (see next section). Otherwise, after the characters slay Ilfrich (or somehow plunder the lair without a fight) they find the *Vial of Greed* (see appendix D) among the treasures.

dragon is absent and the characters begin to take any treasure, the dragon leaps from the lake and attacks. The moment Ilfrich is reduced to zero hit points, he vanishes.

With the dragon's defeat, your soul smiles broadly and rushes towards the lair's exit, where it lingers there waiting for you to follow.

The greedy character, however, has one last obstacle to overcome. As they depart, they must make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw. If they fail the saving throw, they grab a handful of coins. If any of the characters try to leave the cave with wealth stolen from the lair, the soul moans loudly and begins walking back to the coin pile with any of the stolen wealth appearing in their arms. Ilfrich then emerges from the lake, fully restored, and angrier than ever. After the second battle with the dragon, the character no longer needs to make the saving throw to depart without stealing any coins.

Treasure. If the heroes were not searching for the phylactery of the infinite treasure, then this dragon has a small treasure hoard that they may pilfer. They find 12 gems, each worth 100 gp, and 1,800 gp.

13: THELEKARNA'S ROOST

As you trudge through the murky swamp, the fetid air thick with the stench of decay and rot, you catch sight of a winged figure perched atop a gnarled tree stump ahead. The creature's skin is a deep, obsidian, though she's mostly covered with armor. Her hair is a fiery red that matches her eyes. She wears an elegant belt with a shining platinum clasp. Four enormous vultures loom behind her, their beady eyes fixed upon you.

Thelekarna, an **erinyes**, is another power of the Trove. Once a powerful captain under Mammon's command, she was given the region around the Trove to patrol in ages past. Exposure to the contamination of mortal qualities seeped into some flaw in her infernal nature, and she fell prey to a peculiar madness. Mammon has often boasted that Minauros is the grandest of Hells because of its thronging life, and Thelekarna doubles down on this dubious

THELAKARNA

She wears a *Belt of Giant Strength* (storm). With this her longsword receives the following properties.

Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 13 (1d8 + 9) slashing damage, or 14 (1d10 + 9) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

philosophy, claiming that she is the protector of the region's horrible, crawling ecology. Infested with mortal ideas, she claims to be an infernal druid and supplements her regular fiendish powers by mustering and commanding the life of the swamps around her. She is always accompanied by four **giant vultures** that look like they're rotting from the inside out. Lip service to the 'beauty' of her realm might persuade her to spare visitors, at least for a while.

Conclave (Barbarian, Fighter)—Belt of Giant Strength (Storm). If the characters slay Telekarna, they may take the belt from her corpse. It is unlikely that she will part with it in any other way.

I4: THE GRINKEN EYRE

Nobody is quite sure what Grinken Eyre originally was, not even Mammon. It crept into the Trove long ago, and the constant rub of mortal feelings wore it smooth like a stone on a beach. All that is left is a vacant malevolence papered over with a face constructed of all the pieces of mind and life around it—much as the larvae of some insects build shells of plants and stones to disguise themselves. What Grinken Eyre is now is a kind of infernal doppelganger, a thing that can show its visitors any face, feign any positive quality and be absolutely convincing in the moment because there is nothing beneath at all. A guide, a fellow treasure hunter, a questing paladin, a lovable rogue with a charming grin, that kindly old mage or your own best friend, all these things can be Grinken Eyre. And, being a thing of the Nine Hells, any meeting with the creature ends badly sooner or later, a blade in the back, hands at the throat or a treacherous path to a monster's lair. Countless travelers claim to have rid the Nine Hells of Eyre, and yet the thing always seems to haunt the Trove. More recently stories suggest a shift in the monstrous deceiver, though. Those who have encountered it

THE SHAPECHANGER

Use the **empyrean** stats for Grinken Eyre except that he is neutral evil, Medium in size, and possesses the following action:

Change Shape. Grinken Eyre transforms into a form that resembles a Small or Medium Humanoid or back into his true form. Aside from his size, Grinken Eyre's statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed.

and survived tell of longer and longer grace periods before their new companion revealed its evil nature, as though the stitched-together identities Eyre constructs are becoming more and more real, to the point of suppressing the creature's own evil nature. The Trove is full of all manner of mortal experience, after all. Perhaps sufficient scraps of amputated goodwill can redeem even such a monster as Grinken Eyre.

Grinken Eyre may be discovered as a random encounter, or the characters may reach the valley he has claimed. In either case, there is no sign of home or hearth, just Grinken Eyre waiting for them.

A man sits cross-legged upon a log that's halfway submerged in the moist swampland. He glances over at you and then returns his attention to the oversized pipe he's smoking. The pipe smells terrible, adding to the already offensive odors permeating Minauros.

Grinken Eyre is generally in the form of a halfling, but may look like one of the character's father, if they're seeking their father's soul (see below). Otherwise, he assesses the characters and makes no attempt to attack them, though he defends himself if required.

The Phylactery of the Father. If a character has ventured into the Nine Hells to find the soul of their father, Grinken Eyre has taken on their father's appearance. He greets the character and acknowledges them as his child and feigns pleasure at their arrival here. If asked, he insists he is enjoying his time in the Nine Hells and has no interest in leaving. But he's willing to offer a wager: if the character beats him in a game of dice, he says he'll accompany them. Once the character is victorious in a game of chance, or another contest of your choosing, read the following:

There's a terrible noise and your father's features contort, almost tearing apart as he transforms into something both monstrous and indescribable. Yet whatever he has become, he still smiles and says with a snicker, "You have done well, my child. I believe this is what you sought." And then he makes a horrid retching noise and spits up a glistening object.

The character has taken possession of the phylactery of the father and gains the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.



AN INFERNAL WARSHIP DOCKS AT KORDICHA'S MANOR.

CHAPTER 6

Phlegethos, the Fiery Wasteland



ESEMBLING THE ELEMENTAL PLANE OF Fire, Phlegethos is the hottest layer of the Nine Hells and a fiery wasteland. The layer offers a traveler no respite from the flames and heat.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Phlegethos Overview” section. It provides you with the information you need to prepare for exploring this layer of the Nine Hells.

ENCOUNTERS

While on the Styx, remember to roll each day on the River Styx Encounters table in chapter 2, to see if the characters have one of those encounters. After they disembark from the barge, give them some time to explore. When they travel to or from The Elemental Preserve, or any other location they visit on this layer, roll on the Random Encounters in Phlegethos table.

LOCATIONS

The characters need to make their way to The Elemental Preserve, to find the objectives summarized on the Objectives in Phlegethos table. They may want to explore some of the other locations within Phlegethos as well. Use the information in the “Key Locations in Phlegethos” section to guide them on an excursion through these areas.

KOH TAM AND TIAX

If the characters decide to visit areas other than The Elemental Preserve within Phlegethos, like the city of Abriymoch, have Tiax offer to guide them.

Tiax bounces around you with excited energy, seemingly jumping at the chance to stretch his legs. “Just you wait my friends, Tiax is a big man in Phlegethos! Tiax will come, Tiax will show you ...”

If the players take him up on his offer, roll on the Troubles with Tiax table in chapter 1.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN PHLEGETHOS

d6 Encounter

- 1 Two **halogs** (see appendix B) wade through the lava, occasionally sticking their snouts beneath the surface in search of food.
- 2 An infestation of two dozen **fire snakes** flees from five **barbed devils** who hunt them. The vermin broke into an infernal store house and devoured a stockpile of weapons. The devils offer one *Soul Coin* for each head.
- 3 A pack of six **hell hounds**, led by a powerful **hellcat** (see appendix B), roam the wastes looking for food.
- 4 Devils native to Phlegethos have frequent competitions called “fireflights,” wherein the devils fly low and fast across the fiery plane. Each character must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a spined devil collides with them and the character falls, landing with the prone condition and taking 10 (4d4) piercing damage and 14 (4d6) fire damage. On a successful save, the character avoids the collision. If a collision occurs, the **spined devil** attacks, angry that the character has cost them the race.
- 5 A small group of experienced **imps** lead travelers across Phlegethos and into Abriymoch proper. They claim to know the safest routes and offer their services for a platinum coin per person. If the characters pay this fee, they may travel to Abriymoch without any further random encounters.
- 6 Fire, smoke, and wind descend upon the wastes. Visibility becomes severely reduced, and creatures without fire resistance or immunity take 3 (1d6) fire damage at the start of each of their turns unless they find cover. The storm lasts 2d4 hours and halfway through its duration a rogue explosion occurs. This acts as if a *Fireball* spell with a save DC of 20 has detonated, centered around one of the characters.

OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your player’s objectives and lead them to the corresponding areas to ensure they can complete their goals. Once the characters have explored the other areas within Phlegethos, make your way to The Elemental Preserve.



The following objectives can be attained in Phlegethos:

OBJECTIVES IN PHLEGETHOS

Objective	Location
Phylactery of the sister	The Elemental Preserve: Hunting Lodge
Phylactery of the furnace	The Elemental Preserve: Hateli of the Storm's Realm
<i>Amulet of the Inferno</i>	The Elemental Preserve: During "The Hunt" event
<i>Ranseur of Torture</i>	The Elemental Preserve: During "The Hunt" event
Anagwendol	The Elemental Preserve: The Labyrinth

TEMPTATIONS

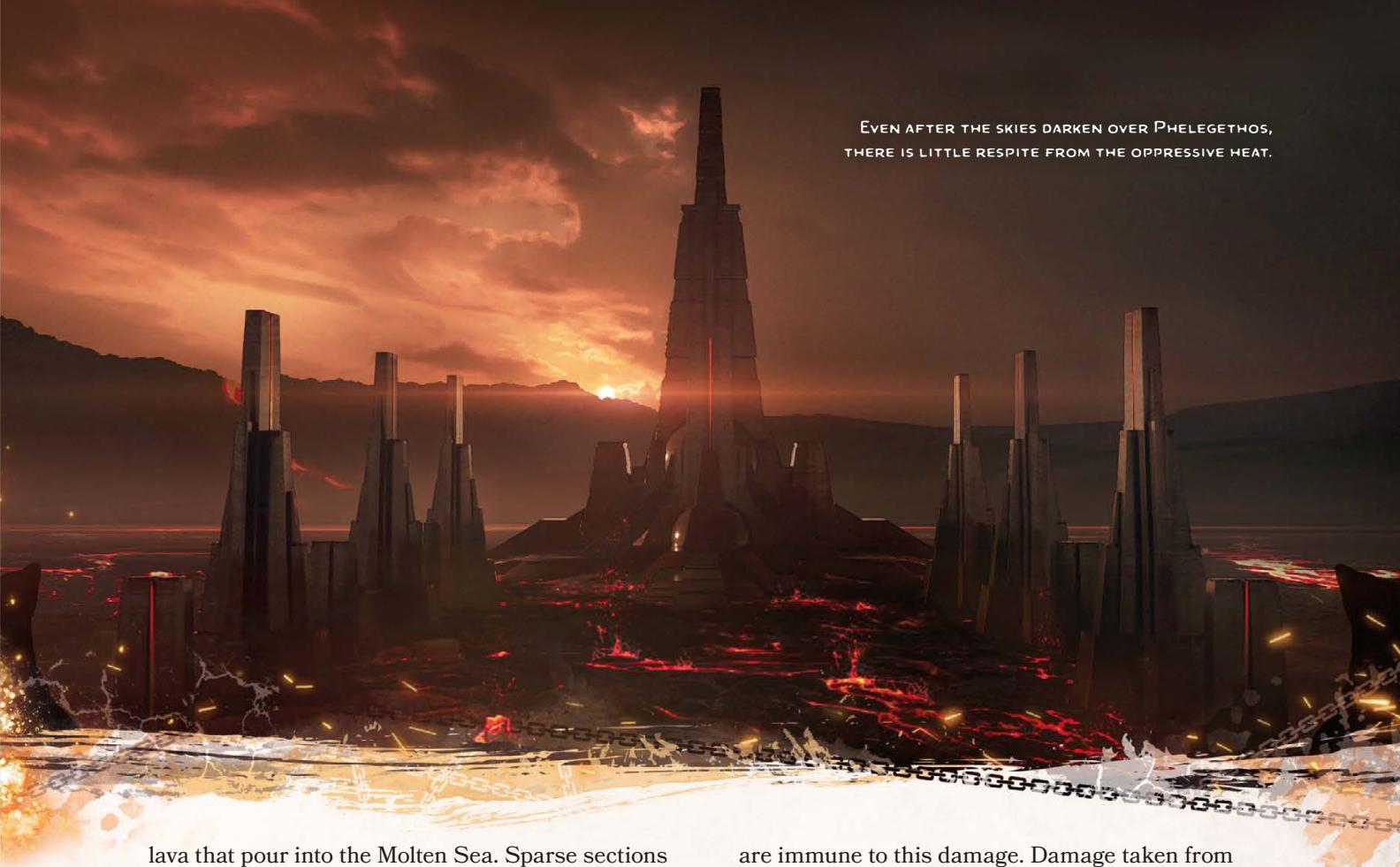
Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Phlegethos. You can of course have them encounter more if you want. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

PHLEGETHOS OVERVIEW

Much of the realm is dominated by the Molten Sea, a collection of fire, magma, and lava spanning thousands of miles. Due to its hostile environment, the only city on the layer is Abriymoch. Found inside the city is the Diabolical Court, the center of laws within the Nine Hells. Hellfire is also created on this layer, inside the Pit of Flame. Everything in Phlegethos, including the layer itself, is hostile to outsiders, and despite the nature of Abriymoch, travelers often perish here. Only devils and a few other types of creatures can survive this realm's extreme environment.

Befitting the inferno of the realm, the River Styx enters through a volcanic portal from Minauros. It mingles with the lava inside the volcano and exits inside its molten rivers. A small layer of obsidian serves as the riverbank, which is also a bank to the lava river flowing alongside the flanks of the Styx. It passes many of the landmarks in the layer, including a dock just outside Abriymoch. As it passes the city, it begins to break from the lava and move deep into the rock, creating a spiraling tunnel system. This spiral leads all the way to Stygia, dropping in temperature the lower it goes.

Phlegethos gets its heat from the chain of volcanoes and molten fissures that cover its surface. Almost constant eruptions create rivers of fire and



EVEN AFTER THE SKIES DARKEN OVER PHELEGETHOS,
THERE IS LITTLE RESPITE FROM THE OPPRESSIVE HEAT.

lava that pour into the Molten Sea. Sparse sections of rock make up the floor of the layer, which are blackened and searing to the touch. The air is superheated to the point that it occasionally bursts into balls of fire, and it smells of brimstone as a result. Navigating the realm is usually done via lava barges or flight, with the heated updrafts providing great lift to infernal airships.

Completely unique to the fiery realm, Phlegethos is ruled by two devils—Belial and his daughter Fierna. Despite occasional bickering and disagreements, the two rule the layer in relative harmony, and with Asmodeus's approval.

LEAVING PHLEGETHOS

Despite being one of the most fortified layers, Phlegethos is possibly one of the easiest for extraplanar travel. There is a permanent portal maintained in Abriymoch, which, although heavily guarded and warded against intrusion, allows all manner of users for a price. It can navigate to other layers of the Nine Hells and is rumored even to have connections to other planes. Travelers can also attempt to traverse the Styx, though Phlegethos' stretch of the river suffers frequent pirate attacks and shakedowns.

FEATURES

Outside the city of Abriymoch, the heat is unmatched and overwhelming. Visitors take 3 (1d6) fire damage each hour they spend in the layer. Creatures with resistance or immunity to fire

are immune to this damage. Damage taken from exposure to Phlegethos hostile environment doesn't interrupt rests unless it would cause a creature to have the unconscious condition.

KEY LOCATIONS IN PHELEGETHOS

Some of the major locations found in Phegethos are described below.

ABRIYMOCH

Standing as the lone marker of civilization within the layer, Abriymoch is a dangerously beautiful city regarded as one of the finest by much of the devil community. In addition to containing the Diabolical Court, which is the only official judicial system in the Nine Hells, the city holds avenues for exploring every sin imaginable. Its streets are magma canals navigated by barges, which lead to numerous shops, taverns, brothels, casinos, theaters, and other pleasurable establishments. While outsiders are generally not welcome within the city, devils from all nine layers flock to it during their downtime.

A gondolier is essential to navigate the magma channels. The gondolier can take the characters to a variety of shops where they can purchase standard equipment, all of it suitably devilish in appearance. It costs 100 gp for an hour of the gondolier's time, but because several devils owe Tiax favors when he accompanies the characters, the ride is free.

TEMPTATION OF PRIDE

"Gaining the Advantage"

At any point during their time in Abriymoch, a **bone devil** approaches and offers to etch a magic tattoo onto one of the characters. The cost is a mere 600 gp. If they agree, review the appropriate temptation event in chapter 2.

If Tiax accompanies them, the first time they reach a destination, read the following:

The gnome practically leaps onto the sidewalk from the magma sprayed vessel. Once on more solid surface, he claps his hands loudly. "Tiax promises big and Tiax delivers big! I present to you the city of Abriymoch, Tiax's city, yes indeed!"

THE PIT OF FLAME

One of the most dangerous locations in all the Nine Hells is contained within Phlegethos: The Pit of Flame. It can be found in the caldera of an ancient super volcano in the center of the layer. Since its discovery, a massive building has been constructed atop the pit. Metal bars crisscross along the top, with balls of infernal steel hanging on chains just above the lake of fire. Barbazus oversee the maintenance and construction of additional layers, while other devils operate the spheres and see to their prisoners. Here, with temperatures harmful even to devils, prisoners from every layer are being tortured. Ascension ceremonies and ritualistic sufferings also take place within the Pit of Flame, making it an extremely revered location within the Nine Hells.

While prisoners dangle overhead, the lower portions of the pit contain numerous walkways and at times serve as a place of pilgrimage for devils (and others) who travel from great distances to observe and revere the suffering all around.

TEMPTATION OF MURDER

"The Heretic Priest"

A priest of an opposing faith to one of the characters (select the most faithful among the party) is speaking with a **succubus**. If the party spends any amount of time eavesdropping, then run "The Heretic Priest" event from chapter 2.

THE ELEMENTAL PRESERVE

The Elemental Preserve is a hunting ground ruled over by a pit fiend named Kordichai. His hunting expeditions are legendary and devils across the Nine Hells covet the rare invitation. When the characters enter Phlegethos, Koh Tam should mention the preserve. Review "The Elemental Preserve" adventure section to answer any questions the characters might ask Koh Tam about that location.

ADVENTURE: THE ELEMENTAL PRESERVE

If the characters profess an interest in entering The Elemental Preserve, Koh Tam (or another appropriate NPC) explains that the story of the preserve is the story of the pit fiend, Baron Kordichai, now an esteemed lieutenant of Fierna. Kordichai was not always a great magnate of the Nine Hells, but that rare thing: a devil that progressed over the centuries through successively more powerful forms as his services to his superiors were recognized.

"Kordichai was a hunter of truant mortals and spent much of his past existence outside the Nine Hells, braving the climes of other planes as he tracked down resourceful souls who had contrived to escape their appointment with the powers below. No soul was safe, and he upheld the twisted honor of the Nine Hells by making a succession of the mighty understand that the contracts of Asmodeus are truly ironbound. And then he was promoted and given a region of Phlegethos to watch over, the Elemental Preserve. Now his role is one of tedious administration where he oversees ambitious young devils who venture into other planes to do what was once his job."

Koh Tam smiles slightly as he continues, "Rumor has it that the entire promotion was Fierna's joke on the vainglorious baron. He was, she decided, having far too much fun, and as the regent of jealousy it was her responsibility to ensure nobody was having a better time than she was. Kordichai's reaction to his new post surprised even Fierna, though. Kordichai lives for the hunt and so he transformed his part of the Nine Hells into what is now called the Elemental Preserve. A place where Kordichai leads hunting expeditions that are so popular that devils across the Nine Hells covet the opportunity to be invited."

ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam's advice to the characters is as follows:

- If the characters are to have any chance of finding what they're looking for they need to meet Kordichai. If they make a good impression, he might invite them on his current hunt which will be akin to a guided tour of the Preserve by the devil that knows it best. In addition, his hunts are often joined by one of the rulers of Phlegethos—Fierna or Belial. Getting a meeting with the pit fiend will cost many *Soul Coins* or gold.
- Alternatively, they could try to contact the poor souls who are the prey of Kordichai's current hunt. These mortals have had to learn the lay of the land or die quickly to Kordichai's predations.

Koh Tam gives them an infernal map. Show the players the map of the Elemental Preserve in appendix F. They can use this map to decide which points of interest they want to explore. Refer to the "Using an Infernal Map" section of chapter 2. A failed or successful Wisdom (Survival) check to use this map has a 50 percent chance of triggering an encounter on the Hunt Random Encounters table. Prior to "Kordichai's Hunt" roll a d8 to determine the encounter from the table; after the hunt begins roll a d12.

KORDICHA'S HUNTING OBSESSION

Having spent so long outside the Nine Hells, in the company of non-devils, Kordichai is as close to eccentric as a denizen of the inferno can become. Kordichai lives for the hunt. He bitterly envies the mortals who get to live and die and truly risk themselves against the great monsters of their worlds, who are all mere puppies and kittens to a great Fiend like himself. Wealth and power in the Nine Hells mean very little to him compared to the thrill of the chase. And so Kordichai decided that if he couldn't travel to hunt, he'd bring the hunt home to him. Of course, the searing fields of Phlegethos are hostile territories for most of the great monsters the planes can boast, so Kordichai—through the calling in of a great many favors—opened a portal that decanted the entire contents of a swathe of the Plane of Fire out into his territory in the Nine Hells.

Between the shores of the molten sea and the basalt canal walls of the Styx he built his wildlife preserve, stocked with Elemental creatures of all kinds. He raised mountains and sunk chasms, had sweating teams of minor devils dig artificial lakes and channels for the lava to roll into, even had them plant whole flaming forests of elemental trees that burn forever without turning to ash, releasing searing seeds buoyed on the eternal updrafts. In seeking to create a hunting ground, Kordichai also inadvertently created a place of eerie and violent beauty within Phlegethos' burning wastes.

The portal that created the Preserve was open for only a moment, but flickers at the heart of the wilderness from time to time, allowing brief communication between the Nine Hells and the Plane of Fire, which might or might not count as an escape depending on who the putative escapee is.

THE ELEMENTAL PRESERVE LOCATIONS

The preserve is a sprawling landscape, dotted with hunting lodges, fire creatures, and devils on the hunt. The characters most likely leave their vessel on the River Styx and embark onto one of the many flying barges leading to Kordichai's Manor (area E4). Alternatively, they might try to travel over the hostile landscape and either find a hunting lodge (area E1) or search for any creatures being hunted by Korichai's other guests.

E1: HUNTING LODGE

As well as his floating barges, Kordichai maintains a number of hunting lodges of incandescent iron dotted across the Preserve, staffed by **barbed devils** and **pain devils** (see appendix B) and stocked with food, drink, and souls for the refreshment of his guests. Here he keeps his trophies, the blazing horns and tusks and wall-mounted heads of his greatest kills—both the fiery beasts of the preserves and those he hunted down on further planes. Visitors have surprised Kordichai staring almost wistfully at the echoes of his past deeds.

The Phylactery of the Sister. If one of the characters is seeking the phylactery with their sister's soul, they find it crammed among Kordichai's many trophies at the first hunting lodge they enter. If Kordichai accompanies them and they try to steal the phylactery, they must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. If he isn't present, they can take it without anyone noticing. Likewise, if they simply ask Kordichai for it, he admits to not knowing why it is among his trophies—he is willing to give it to them in exchange for the head of any creature the characters slay in The Elemental Preserve.

Once the character has taken possession of the phylactery of their sister, they gain the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

TEMPTATION OF JEALOUSY

"The Jealous Beauty"

If the characters have already had an encounter at this hunting lodge, save this temptation event for the next hunting lodge they discover. Otherwise, a **pit fiend** currently enjoying the fine refreshments smiles broadly upon seeing one of the characters. The devil offers the characters a blessing, no strings attached. Review "The Jealous Beauty" temptation event from chapter 2.

E2: HATELI OF THE STORM'S REALM

The Elemental Preserve isn't entirely the unchallenged territory of Fiends. Kordichai perhaps received a little more than he bargained for when he stole away a great stretch of the Plane of Fire. A community of efreet has its home somewhere in the wilds, established in caves and ambushing unwary devils. Trapped for generations, they've since found their way to the portal and been able to cross sporadically back and forth to their home. Their leader, Hateli of the Storm, has sworn vengeance on all of the Nine Hells for the desecration wreaked against the Firelands. She and her people remain in the Preserve by choice, sabotaging the devils where they can. Kordichai is well aware of them but considers their efforts an additional spice to his hunts. While efreet are usually almost as unwelcome as devils to a mortal, Hateli has been known to shelter and aid those cut loose in the Preserve purely to spite the devils. Hateli (**efreeti** with 250 hit points) is accompanied by 1d4 **efreet** and 2d4 **salamanders**.

The Phylactery of the Furnace. A character seeking their soul may find it in the possession of Hateli. A wretched creature, vaguely resembling the character, is forced to shovel coal into a massive furnace. If the creature ever falters, Hateli lashes out at it with her whip. If the character expresses outrage, or demands their soul returned, Hateli offers them a simple exchange.

"Hunt the hunter and bring me the pit fiend's head and I shall return what is yours." The efreeti extends her hand with the offer. "Do we have a bargain?"

If the characters bring Kordichai's head to Hateli, the efreeti fulfills her end of the deal, extinguishes the furnace, and returns their phylactery to them. If the party fights the efreet instead, even, after slaying them all, the soul continues shoveling fuel into the furnace.

THE INFERNAL BRACER

Kordichai has hastened Anagwendol's fall by fastening a bracer forged from infernal iron about her left forearm. While wearing this bracer, Anagwendol is cursed, seeing all other creatures as devils that she must slay. The bracer also makes Anagwendol immune to any magic that might otherwise bring her back to her senses. Anagwendol isn't aware of the bracer and even if she were, she can't remove it or destroy it herself.

The characters can target the bracer with melee or ranged attacks (AC 18; 50 hit points; immunity to cold, fire, poison and psychic damage; resistance to all other damage types). If Anagwendol is grappled, incapacitated, or restrained, attacks made against the bracer are made with advantage.

If the characters ever stop the creature from shoveling coal it whimpers and then vanishes. A moment later there is a shriek and the creature reappears, scrambling out of the furnace. Any other creature that enters the furnace, or starts their turn within the furnace, takes 78 (12d12) fire damage.

Only once those fires are dimmed forever, is the soul released. This requires a combined total of 100 points of cold damage, inflicted upon the furnace. At that point, the furnace's inferno is finally dampened, and the character recovers their phylactery.

E3: ANAGWENDOL'S PRISON

In the center of the preserve stalks perhaps the most dangerous creature. For therein is the prison that both holds the deva Anagwendol and keeps the rest of the preserve safe from her. Grown mad by her captivity, she has become the ultimate hunter, slaying anything that enters the bewildering tunnels in which Kordichai imprisoned her. More information about **Anagwendol** can be found in appendix C.

As the characters approach the location:

A dome of earth rises above the lava and gloom. It is a natural thing, if such can ever be said of this place, formed by the cooling of lava, a nest of tunnels not unlike the intestines of a poor creature cut apart and lain across the fiery landscape. Even from the outside the twists and turns seem impossible to make sense of. Tunnels curve left then right, others rise upwards, before twisting their way downwards. It is impossible not to see the many charred and cracked bones, a veritable graveyard marring the only visible entrance into the maze.

The characters must search the maze, where they inevitably run into Anagwendol because she begins to hunt them the moment they enter her domain. She is a swift and dangerous hunter. Kordichai has broken her. He has also placed an infernal bracer around her left forearm that prevents any magic from ending Anagwendol's never-ending torment. Only once that bracer has been destroyed (see sidebar) can Anagwendol be freed.

But first they must overcome her. At the end of each hour meandering through the dark, twisting tunnels, roll a d4 (adding 1 for each previous roll). Once the result is 4 or higher, Anagwendol strikes. She emerges from hiding, and if not detected, she grapples a character and carries them straight upwards, through a vertical tunnel, depositing them in a chamber 60 feet above their companions. She then attacks them. If she slays her victim, she repeats the ambush 1d4 hours later against another character.

THE ELEMENTAL PRESERVE



The Hunt. If her captives are helped by allies—or if she fails to surprise the characters—she fights for 3 rounds, then attempts to disappear down one of the hallways. Whenever the characters lose sight of her, they must track her, requiring a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check.

The second time they encounter her, read the following:

"Vile devils, come to torture me some more?" The tormented deva before you hisses, her eyes glazed, as if not truly seeing you. Her silvery skin is covered with scars and puckered wounds, grime, and blood. A battered bracer covers her left forearm, glowing with a reddish hue. Her wing feathers droop and look as if some animal has gnawed at their tips. She raises a blood-crusted greatsword. "I'll slay all the legions of the Nine Hells if I must. You shall be stopped."

And with that, she leaps to the attack.

She tries to slay any injured characters, but won't retreat, unless it is tactically the best thing for her to do. She'll eventually stand her ground and fight to the death, and this is the characters' best opportunity to destroy the bracer and free her from her torment.

When Anagwendol is freed from the curse she gains four levels of exhaustion. This exhaustion cannot be cured while she remains in the Nine Hells. If the characters don't use the ritual that the Hellriders taught them to free her immediately, she accompanies them to Koh Tam's barge.

Treasure. Among the debris in her prison, the heroes find 2,500 gp and 325 pp.

E4: KORDICHAIS MANOR

If all the greatest and most luxurious hunting lodges of the mortal world were swept up into one structure, it wouldn't be half so impressive as Kordichai's manor. The sprawling building is made of stone and has several floors, each circled by a shaded balcony, and wide glass windows. Even from a distance you see the giant bones and polished antlers that have been worked into the exterior design, framing doorways, and curling up from along the pointed rooftops. You have no doubt that the interior of the manor will be decorated with pelts and taxidermized beasts. This is the home of a hunter.

Anyone approaching the manor is intercepted by two **horned devils**, each with a pack of four **hell**

hounds. They demand that intruders turn back, but a donation of 5 *Soul Coins* or 4,000 gp convinces them to set up an audience with Kordichai. Proceed to "An Important Audience" in the "Kordichai's Hunt" section below.

KORDICHAIS HUNT

Prior to the hunt, the characters must have an audience with Kordichai, the outcome of which determines their role in the upcoming hunt.

AN IMPORTANT AUDIENCE

Your escort brings you before a powerful looking pit fiend, sitting on a massive chair built from the bones of prey from past hunts. A curious grin flickers across his face. "Who is this that stands so recklessly before me? Tell me, are you here to hunt, or to be hunted?"

An audience with Kordichai can go four ways depending on how convincing the characters are. Have them make a Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check and based on the result, one of the following occurs:

Rolled 25 or Higher: Kordichai is amenable to many suggestions, including setting up a 'hunting accident' for Fierna or Belial.

Rolled 20–24: Kordichai is greatly impressed with the characters, and they get an invitation to become members of his hunt.

Rolled 15–19: Kordichai feels that they might be worthy of joining his team of beaters.

Rolled 14 or Lower: Kordichai has them surrounded. He tells them that their reward for wasting his time is that they get to be added to the hunt.

Once the result is determined review the following sections describing the hunters, beaters, and prey. Consult the appropriate sidebar, given the party's result from their audience with Kordichai.

MEMBERS OF THE HUNT

Kordichai leads hunting expeditions over his lands, invitations to which are quite the coveted commodity among the devil nobility. What would normally be an unforgivably erratic nature in a senior Fiend becomes acceptable entertainment when he leads a party of jaded devils to hunt prey from levitating barges of searing bronze. From their decks the great devils connive, gossip and scheme, broker deals, gorge on luxuries, and enjoy the screaming as infernal engineers pour a wealth of shrieking souls into the boilers below. The rails of the barges are lined with ballistae from which cackling aristocrats launch projectiles with tips of barbed ice guaranteed to cause the elemental fauna as much pain as possible.

A FIRE KRAKEN HOLDS ITS OWN
AGAINST A FLEET OF INFERNAL WARSHIPS.



Following a wounded Elemental and tormenting it until it expires, is absolutely the done thing—before ripping free some trophy for later bragging rights.

The hunt consists of Kordichai (**pit fiend**), a **horned devil**, a **corruption devil** (see appendix B) and either Fierna or Belial. With one of the two rulers present, characters may have an opportunity to steal one of their artifacts from them (see the end of this chapter for further details).

The Characters as Hunters. This is a rare opportunity for the characters to interact with an archdevil directly. Both are willing to talk with the characters, though are amused at the presence of mortals among the other hunters.

As members of the hunt, the characters may use the ballista on the barge, or leave the safety of the barge to face the prey directly. Each hour roll on the Hunt Random Encounters table to see what the hunters discover.

Ballista Bolt. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d10) cold damage. A creature with fire resistance or immunity is considered vulnerable to the damage of this bolt.

BEATERS OF THE HUNT

Every hunt needs a team of beaters to rouse the prey so that the hunters can have their fun. A selection of devils, powerful outsiders and even particularly wicked mortal rangers are recruited into Kordichai's service for this purpose. He even bargains for the souls of those who were formally his hunting companions, recruiting them into eternal service as his beaters and wardens.

The Characters as Beaters. As beaters, the characters join a group that includes a **bone devil**, a pair of **azers**, a **salamander** and a tiefling **scout**. These beaters follow the leadership of whoever the characters appoint as captain. Their job is to drive the prey toward Kordichai's barge. To do this, they need to spread out in a formation that has them 30 feet away from the nearest beater. Every hour, the designated captain must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. Success results in a roll on the Hunt Random Encounters table. Each failure angers Kordichai. Three failures in a row and Kordichai calls the hunt off and sends a half-dozen **horned devils** to dispose of the beaters. The

characters are now treated as ‘prey’ and should use the appropriate encounters during the remainder of their exploration of the preserve.

THE MORTAL PREY

As well as hunting powerful creatures, Kordichai has other cruel pastimes on the Preserve. Bands of valiant mortals who brave the Nine Hells are sometimes brought to him for disposal, and he releases them into the searing wilds of the Preserve. Each is given some trinket that wards off the heat and the choking air, but only for a limited period. The wretched mortals are told of the portal to the Plane of Fire that might allow them escape from the Nine Hells (though not whether it is open at this particular point in time) and set loose. Shortly after, Kordichai, his beaters, and guests start their own hunt, in the air or on foot. He particularly appreciates it when his victims turn on each other and fight over the protective trinkets. In cases where there is only one runner left at the end, Kordichai normally grants the fugitive the honor of single combat, a risk that raises infernal eyebrows but at least provides entertainment one way or the other.

The Characters as Prey. If Kordichai designates the characters as prey, then they’re told of a location in the Preserve where they can meet the other prey. If the characters are looking for the prey on their own, they can use divination magic or tracking—a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check—to locate them. The prey consists of a human **veteran**, elf **mage**, dwarf **gladiator** and tiefling **priest**. They look to the characters for leadership. They know some of the locations and denizens of the Preserve, including the hunting lodges, the **efreeti** and the Eriflamme. Each hour, the prey must make a DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check to avoid the dangers of the Preserve. Failure means a roll on the Hunt Random Encounters table. A failure of 10 or less means that Kordichai’s barge has found them. They can also try to find a specific location or denizen such as a hunting lodge. This requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, but also means that they can’t avoid the dangers and so must roll on the Hunt Random Encounters table, even if they succeed.

The Trinkets. Each of the hunted is given an amulet. Once worn, it grants them immunity to fire damage for three hours. After which point the amulet smolders then disintegrates. The other prey only have two hours remaining before they begin taking fire damage. The characters can choose when to wear their trinkets.

THE HUNT

The various events and outcomes for the hunt are determined by rolling on the following table. For each hour of the hunt (or when directed to do so),

roll a d12 and consult the table. If the characters are being hunted, then they also roll on this table every hour. If the characters earlier discovered a particular creature while exploring the Elemental Preserve (and did not kill it), and they’re now attempting to find that creature again, they may return to that location directly without rolling on the table.

Each encounter should only occur once. If an encounter is rolled again, use the next lowest number. If there are no valid encounters, then use the next highest number.

HUNT RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d12	Encounter
1–3	Hunting Lodge
4	Efreet
5–6	Dragons
7	Fire Kraken
8	Phoenix
9	Eriflamme
10–11	Mortal Prey/Kordichai’s Hunt
12	Hunting Accident

Hunting Lodge. A number of hunting lodges of incandescent iron can be found across the Preserve (see area E1). This result can be rolled more than once—as there are several lodges.

Efreet. In the caves dotted across the wilds a community of efreet has made its home (see area E2).

Dragons. This aspect of the hunt has made Kordichai particularly hated by the queen of dragons, Tiamat. He has a breeding pair of red dragons that he uses to keep the preserve well stocked. When a team of beaters successfully rouses a nest of **young red dragons**, four of them attack.

Fire Kraken. The **fire kraken** (see the accompanying stat block) are among the most dangerous creatures in the Nine Hells and there’s one in Kordichai’s preserve.

Phoenix. A single **phoenix** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) is encountered.

Mortal Prey/Kordichai’s Hunt. If the characters are hunters, then the barge comes across a bedraggled group of prey (see the section, “The Mortal Prey”). The outcome is certain, but Kordichai wishes to make them suffer before he and his companions snuff out their lives. If the characters are being hunted, they spy Kordichai’s barge and can set up an ambush.

Eriflamme. Dragons and phoenixes may not be the most dangerous denizens of the Preserve. There remains one beast hidden across the many miles of wilderness that Kordichai has hunted but never caught. A thing of guile and power and stealth hiding in the brightness and ambushing the unwary, it is neither an Elemental nor a Fiend



THE MIGHTY ERIFLAMME HAS
ELUDED KORDICHLAI FOR MILLENNIA.

FIRE KRAKEN

Gargantuan Elemental, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 402 (23d20 + 161)

Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	11 (+0)	24 (+7)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +14

Skills Athletics +15, Nature +7, Survival +12

Damage Immunities fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities frightened, paralyzed

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, and Primordial but can't speak, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +7

Freedom of Movement. The kraken ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can't reduce its speed or cause it to be restrained. It can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or grapples.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the kraken fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Siege Monster. The kraken deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The kraken makes two attacks using its Tentacle, Fling, or a combination of the two.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 18 (3d6 + 8) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) fire damage.

If the target is a Large or smaller creature grappled by the kraken, the creature is swallowed and the grapple ends. While

but allegedly a creature formed of the two different planes meeting. The **Eriflamme** (see the accompanying stat block), as it has become known, is said to resemble a perpetually blazing tarrasque formed of interlocking Elementals all tessellated together. It is malleable, capable of breaking apart into a host of individual bodies and forming again at will. Track it as he might, Kordichai has never brought the monster to bay. Only the twisted wreckage of barges, the ruin of lodges, and the bodies of his servants testify to its existence and its power. Over time, Kordichai has grown more and more obsessed with this one elusive denizen of his Preserve, taking greater and greater risks, even shirking his duties at the slightest suggestion it has made an appearance.

Hunting Accident. Even as Abriymoch is the preferred destination for devils from all over the Nine Hells seeking off-duty entertainment, so a place on Kordichai's hunts is the prize for any infernal notable. Needless to say, his superiors Fierna and Belial are constantly foisting less than suitable guests on him, sometimes because they wish to genuinely

swallowed, a creature has the blinded and restrained conditions, has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the kraken, and takes 42 (12d6) fire damage at the start of the kraken's turns. If the kraken takes 50 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, it must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall into a space within 10 feet of the kraken and now have the prone condition. If the kraken dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of movement, exiting with the prone condition.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d4 + 8) fire damage. If the target is a Huge or smaller creature, it has the grappled condition (escape DC 16). While grappled, the target also has the restrained condition. Any target that starts its turn grappled by the kraken takes 5 (2d4) fire damage. The kraken has five tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

Fling. One Large or smaller object or creature grappled by the kraken is thrown up to 60 feet in a random direction, and now has the prone condition. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at a creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked down with the prone condition.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The kraken can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The kraken regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Appendage. The kraken makes a Fling attack.

Fire Breath (Costs 3 Actions). The kraken exhales fire in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

reward an underling or curry favor with magnates from other layers of the Nine Hells, alternatively because they wish to make a fool of some pompous upstart they know is ill-equipped to keep up with Kordichai's hectic pace. Devils have been killed on his hunts, sometimes in hunting accidents and occasionally—should Fierna give Kordichai the word—in ‘hunting accidents’. Everyone knows it happens, and that only adds to the thrill of the chase. If the characters have persuaded Kordichai to set up an ambush on Fierna or Belial, then this is when he makes his move.

FIGHTING DEVILS

Attacking Fierna or Belial without Kordichai's support is likely a losing battle, but some characters may have powerful incentives urging them forward.

Deathstalkers—Obtaining Belial's Ranseur of Torture or Fierna's Amulet of the Inferno. The hunt is the only opportunity where the characters can gain possession of either of these two powerful artifacts. But it requires outsmarting an archdevil or killing one.

At any time, the characters might attempt to use trickery to obtain the item (such as casting a spell like *Telekinesis* to steal one of the artifacts right off their persons). But it is challenging to do so without the archdevil or witnesses noticing.

There may also be particular moments during the hunt to obtain the item:

The Characters are Hunters. If the characters have joined the hunt, it wouldn't be difficult to convince the archdevil to separate from the others. Both Belial and Fierna are often bored, and either may seize any chance to disrupt things.

As Beaters. Once prey is engaged, the characters might try to attack the archdevil when they join the hunt. Or prior to engagement they might set a trap for the archdevil.

As Prey. If the characters are being hunted, they would need to set up an ambush, preferably with the other prey as allies. Anagwendol's prison (area E3) is a good location for an ambush.

If the characters attack **Belial** or **Fierna** (see appendix A for both), Kordichai and any allies defend the archdevil (unless a betrayal has been previously negotiated). During a fight, the optional disarm rules, found in the "Combat Options" section within the *Dungeon Master's Guide* might also allow the characters to steal the artifact rather than finish a likely losing battle against an archdevil.

ERIFLAMME

Gargantuan Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 518 (28d20 + 224)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (+0)	26 (+8)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +8, Cha +8

Skills Arcana +5, Athletics +18

Damage Immunities fire, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 28 (120,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +8

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the Eriflamme fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The Eriflamme has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Eriflamme makes four Claw attacks. It can replace one of the attacks with a Bite attack.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +18 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.
Hit: 20 (3d6 + 10) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

A HUNTING LODGE.



Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +18 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 24 (4d6 + 10) piercing damage plus 33 (6d10) fire damage.

Reform. All the Eriflamme's fire elementals vanish and the Eriflamme reappears in one of their spaces. The Eriflamme's hit points are equivalent to the combined hit points of the fire elementals.

REACTIONS

Split (2/Day). As a reaction to taking damage, the Eriflamme can split into fire elementals and reduce the damage to 0. The Eriflamme can form up to 10 fire elementals, splitting its remaining hit points between them. The fire elementals appear in spaces adjacent to or within the Eriflamme's old location, and all act on the Eriflamme's initiative. They gain a +5 bonus to attack rolls and have the Eriflamme's Reform action.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Eriflamme can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Eriflamme regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam. The Eriflamme makes a Claw attack, which deals force damage instead of slashing damage if it hits.

Fireglide. The Eriflamme moves up to half its speed. It can fly during this movement.

Chomp (Costs 2 Actions). The Eriflamme makes a Bite attack with advantage.



NO ONE FINDS THE CHASM OF FOUND THINGS.
IT FINDS YOU.

CHAPTER 7

Stygia, the Frozen Sea



TYGIA IS A VAST FROZEN SEA, DECORATED with ice and snow. Unlike the other layers of the Nine Hells, Stygia doesn't have a capital city, nor a place from which its archdevil rules. Even with a saltwater body underneath the ice, the only permanent open water in the realm is the Styx, which lazily meanders through the entire realm. A constant twilight, accompanied by atmospheric lightning storms, makes the realm appear harsh and bleak—not an inaccurate assessment. Few devils call the layer their home, though that doesn't mean Stygia lacks inhabitants.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Stygia Overview” section. It provides you with everything you need to guide your players through this wasteland.

ENCOUNTERS

The isolated stretches of ice that the characters venture across bring with them their own unique challenges. The creatures that can be encountered on this layer of the Nine Hells are well equipped to deal with the frigid temperatures. Roll on the Random Encounters in Stygia table to see which of them the characters encounter.

LOCATIONS

Most devils aren't foolish enough to make Stygia their home. The characters find no large cities on its surface. However, in tougher climes tougher creatures thrive. There are many caves that lie underneath the surface of Stygia. Here some of the most dangerous denizens of the Nine Hells can be found. The characters need to make their way to The Chasm of Found Things, a vast cavern system that houses a colony of kuo-toa. They live there and worship the terrifying horrors that make their home under the ice. Before they venture there the characters may want to explore other parts of Stygia. The “Key Locations in Stygia” section provides you with the information you need to guide their excursions.

KOH TAM

Have Koh Tam give directions to the characters before they disembark. He can give information about the sights they may want to visit, but insists they search the Chasm as he has heard rumor of the treasures at its bottom.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN STYGIA

d6 Encounter

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | One ice devil travels through the icy hellscape. |
| 2 | Breaking through the ice to hunt for food, a kraken with immunity to cold damage thrashes about. If it spots any prey, such as mortals visiting the Nine Hells, it attacks. |
| 3 | 2d6 white abishai (see <i>Monsters of the Multiverse</i>) stalk the blizzards, looking for treasure to bring back to their lair. When they spot the characters, they threaten and extort hoping for loot. |
| 4 | A mismatched pack of animals, starved nearly to death, attacks the characters out of desperation. The pack is led by an ancient mammoth , but also includes 3d6 polar bears . |
| 5 | Shouts and sounds of combat can be heard from nearby. A pair of frost giants are locked in a heated battle with a remorhaz . It is a den mother, and each of the 2d4 eggs in its hive, are worth 500 gp. |
| 6 | A pocket of intense cold erupts in a 60-foot-radius sphere around one of the characters. Each creature within the area must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 42 (12d6) cold damage. On a successful save, it takes half as much damage. |

OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your player's objectives and lead them to the corresponding areas to ensure they can complete their goals.

The following objectives can be attained in Stygia:

OBJECTIVES IN STYGIA

Objective	Location
Phylactery of the oathbreaker	Chasm of Found Things: The Echoes
Phylactery of the business partner	Chasm of Found Things: The Angel of the Ice
<i>Manual of Golems</i> (iron)	Chasm of Found Things: The Aboleth
<i>Rod of Resurrection</i>	Chasm of Found Things: The Awful Fisher
<i>Holy Avenger</i>	Chasm of Found Things: The Angel of the Ice
<i>True-Ice Shards</i>	Chasm of Found Things: The Keeper of Found Things

TEMPTATIONS

Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Stygia. You can of course have them encounter more if you want. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

STYGIA OVERVIEW

On its fiery spiral through Phlegethos, the Styx slowly cools until it reaches the roof of Stygia. From there, it corkscrews downwards, with a frozen bed made from the river itself creating a beautiful sculpture. As it reaches the ground, its temperature and composition etch a pathway out of the ice and the saltwater below. It runs unimpeded through the layer, though the endeavor causes it to have sharp turns, dangerous rapids, and deadly ice tunnels. Concluding its journey at a yawning pit near the edge of Stygia, the Styx turns into a waterfall, falling thousands of feet onto Malbolge below.

Many creatures call the frozen surface of Stygia home, most of which aren't native to the Nine Hells. Small pockets of warmer temperature dot the sea, creating arctic swamps of plants and lichen. Animals such as **mammoths**, **wolves**, and **polar bears** flock to the swamps for warmth and sustenance. In the region of Stygia known as Sheyuushk, enormous sharks the size of whales swim below the frozen surface.

The frozen prince, Levistus, is the archdevil in charge of Stygia. When he was first frozen for his crimes, Geryon took his place, but he has since been deposed by Asmodeus. Levistus spends much of his time observing other planes and hatching plans, choosing to leave his layer a wilderness.

Although no capital of Stygia exists, there remain smaller cities constructed on particularly large ice floes. They're usually near the Styx and are the most lawless places found in the Nine Hells. Because no archdevil rules the layer, it has become a haven for devils shirking their duties or looking to escape. Hunting parties supply the inhabitants with food and experience, and travelers along the Styx occasionally bring trade or souls. The inhabitants know that, should Levistus demand their attention, they would have to serve their master. For this reason, even in their lawlessness, they continue to respect his rule. One exception to the dens of Stygia exists: the city of Tantlin. It remains independent from archdevil rule but follows a strict set of rules and regulations.

LEAVING STYGIA

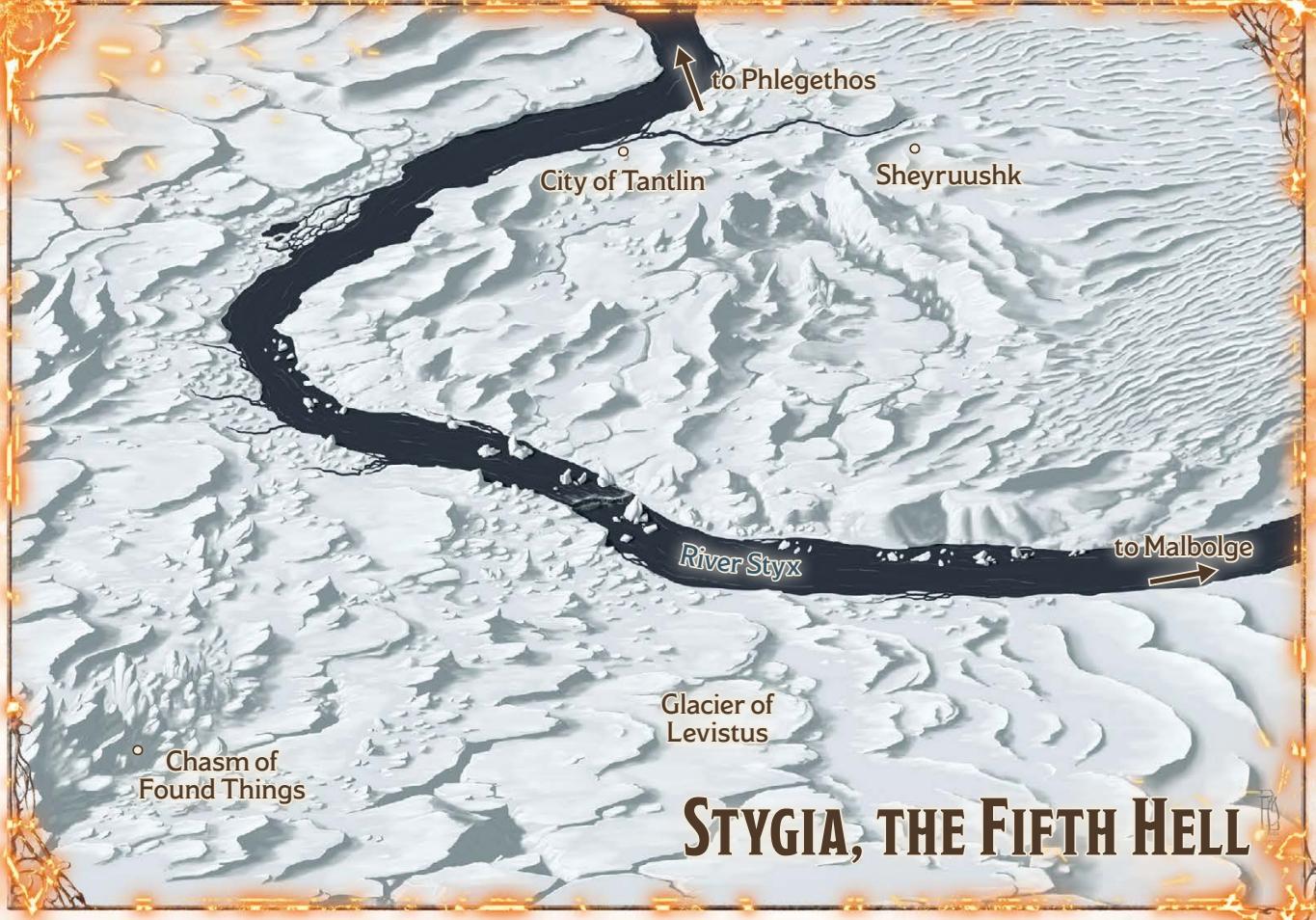
Including the interdimensional portals directly connected to the Styx, traveling between layers in Stygia is simple and concise. Entering and exiting the realm is done via the River Styx. Creatures with flying capabilities could fly up into Phlegethos where the Styx enters, or down into Malbolge, but both routes are extremely dangerous. Going up requires navigating the lightning storm, which is powerful and chaotic enough that few make it out alive. Likewise, the pit leading to Malbolge is plagued by falling rocks and sudden shifts in wind pattern, making the descent more luck than skill.

FEATURES

The cold of Stygia chills to the bone, leaving creatures fighting for survival. Each time a creature finishes a long rest, they must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of

STYGIA'S GLACIERS HIDE MANY SECRETS.





STYGIA, THE FIFTH HELL

exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold automatically succeed on the save.

As a haven for devils shirking their duties or contracts, this layer encourages chaotic thinking and rebellion. Non-lawful creatures visiting the plane experience a constant urge to rebel and shirk cooperation.

KEY LOCATIONS IN STYGIA

Some of the major locations found in Stygia are described below.

TANTLIN

Constructed along a bank of the Styx, Tantlin overlooks a unique branch in the river. Many portals connecting to other planes of existence are tied to the distributaries, and travelers from all over arrive and depart on the Styx. This makes Tantlin a unique trading city in the Nine Hells, with its focus on commerce completely disconnected from the soul trade. While they welcome travelers of all kinds, mortals find the temperature extremely dangerous, and demons are slain on sight by an elite hunting party-turned-police force.

TEMPTATION OF BETRAYAL

"Mixed Blessings"

A pit fiend, perhaps in the service of Levistus, approaches a character.

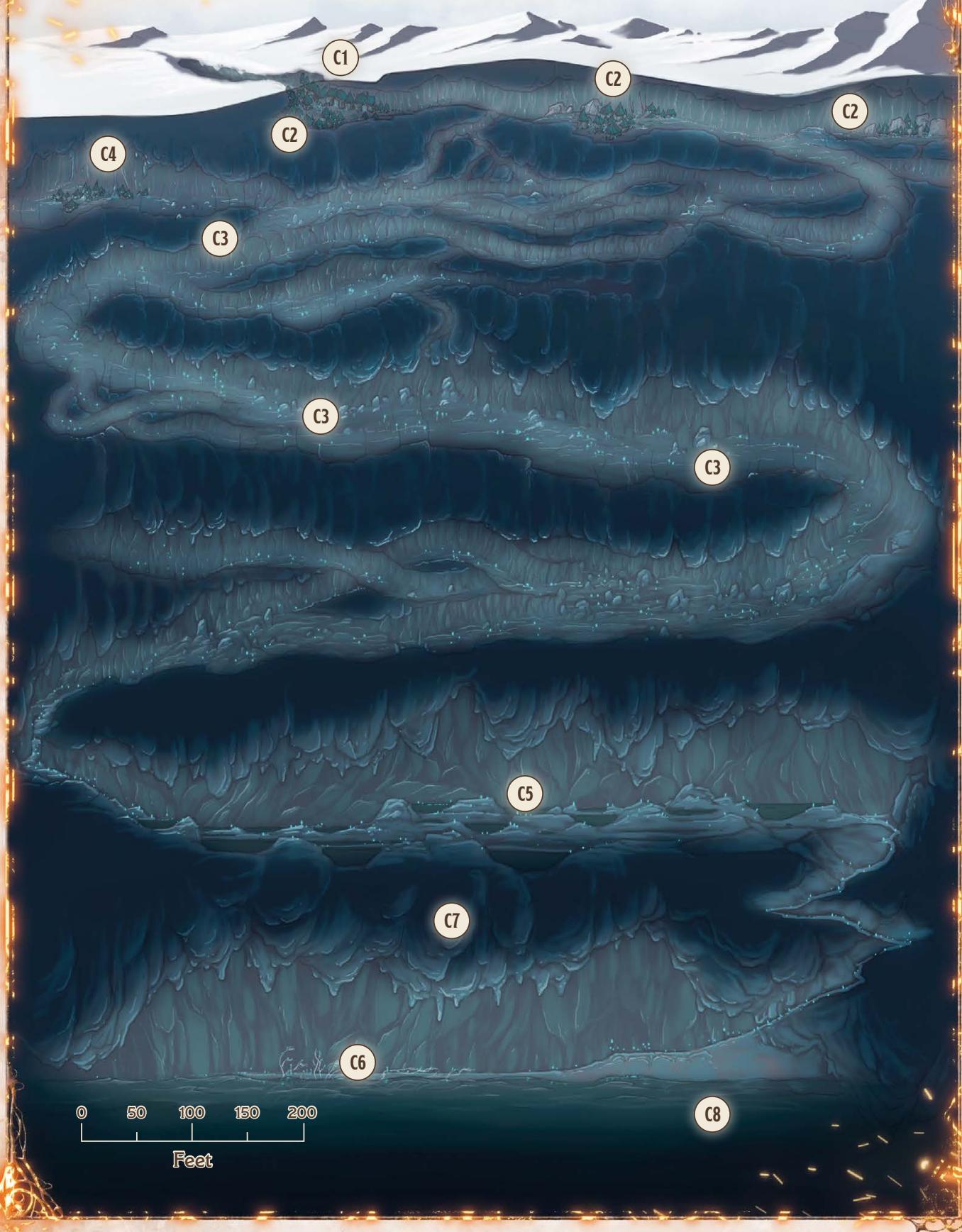
"You there, mortal." It says, its voice booming, its skin sizzling as snow falls upon its massive shoulders. "I come bearing a gift, a boon to you from my master."

If the characters talk more and accept the boon, run the appropriate temptation event in chapter 2, but the pit fiend never reveals the true identity of its master.

GLACIER OF LEVISTUS

This glacier contains the frozen prince, Levistus. Trapped in the ice by Asmodeus he is unable to remove himself from his predicament. After Geryon was stripped from his mantle, Asmodeus reinstated Levistus as ruler of Stygia. However, he opted not to release him from his icy prison. It most likely amuses Asmodeus to frustrate Levistus so. Reinstated in name only, the archdevil lies in wait, observing and scheming for the day he is released from his prison. He intends to make it a day to remember ...

THE CHASM OF FOUND THINGS



0 50 100 150 200
Feet

Those who dare travel to the tomb of Levistus may spot him through the ice. The frustration emanating from the archdevil is almost tangible in places. The tomb is guarded by a large detail of ice devils, their numbers enough to convince the characters not to linger here.

SHEYRUUSHK

Near the city of Tantlin a crack between two icebergs gives access to Sheyruushk. Here the sharklike sahuagin are found, sea devils that have made their home in the waters underneath the ice. The sahuagin roam the waters of Sheyruushk. In those places where the ice is thin enough, they can be glimpsed, riding massive sharks, and gliding through the water underneath. However, travelers would be wise to resist the urge to go and see this sight. If the ice is thin enough to allow a glimpse of the sahuagin, it is also thin enough for these fierce aquatic warriors to breach it for an attack. If the characters don't want to be dragged underneath the ice, they best not visit here.

If asked to take them here, Koh Tam refuses. He explains that the sahuagin are known to sink ships that venture into their domain.

TEMPTATION OF GREED

"The Greedy Art Lover"

If the characters spend an hour or more exploring this area before returning to a safer location, they find a devilish arm extruding from the ice. It takes half an hour to excavate the corpse and when they do so they observe that the dead creature is holding a ring in its hand, its frozen eyes staring at it in rapture. The characters must break the corpse's hand to take the *Ring of Collecting* (see appendix D).

CHASM OF FOUND THINGS

Those traveling across the frozen wastes of Stygia, looking for a place to rest may be unlucky enough to wander into the Chasm of Found Things. They may believe themselves fortunate, thinking they've found shelter from the icy cold. But they're mistaken. No one finds the Chasm, it finds you. And once it has tricked you into exploring its labyrinthian caverns, it won't let go without a fight. And yet, this is where our characters must venture to search its hidden depths for the things that were lost to them.

ADVENTURE: THE CHASM OF FOUND THINGS

The Chasm of Found Things is a mile deep rift in the glaciers of Stygia. Ancient and powerful entities dwell in its depths and lure both devil and mortal alike to their doom.

When the characters first enter Stygia, Koh Tam has the following to say:

"Stygia: the least or the most hospitable of all the Nine Hells, depending on your standing with the infernal hosts. A place run fallow—if a blasted frozen waste atop a fathomless sea can earn the term—under the hand of an absentee duke. Everything starves in Stygia. The elements make no contracts. Truant mortals come here to evade infernal scrutiny. The wilderness, while harsh, offers a fairer fight for survival than other layers. But Stygia has its own traps and surprises. Devils are cruel, but they can be bargained with. Other fates are less open to negotiation." Koh Tam shudders and draws his cloak closer around himself.

"Still, you must venture out there, into the cold.

Allow yourself to get lost." Koh Tam gestures at the frozen wastes. "Sometimes those lost within the blizzards of Stygia find signs: mortal tracks through the snow, set down recently. Carvings in the ice claiming a place of safety and shelter. Mortals are drawn across the wilderness until they reach the mouth of a great ice cave that descends into the frozen substrate. The Caves of Rest. Except, of course, this is the Nine Hells and there is no rest. What weary travelers have reached is the Chasm of Found Things, from which few have ever returned. It is here that your search must continue."

ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam suggests that they wander into the heart of Stygia if they're to find the Chasm of Found Things and has the following advice:

- They can't look for the Chasm, they must let it find them. The Chasm only allows itself to be found by those who are lost and exhausted of all hope. The characters must do this by traveling without resting.
- They should be prepared for the extreme weather, and he suggests they acquire appropriate equipment, magic items, and spells to ward against the cold.

Once each character has gained a level of exhaustion, they hear whispers and see strange apparitions

in the blowing snow, and eventually find themselves near the Chasm of Found Things, drawn to the entrance (area C1).

CHASM OF FOUND THINGS LOCATIONS

Wandering the frozen wastes endlessly, the characters grow convinced that their search is futile. Exhausted and frostbitten they collapse in the snow. The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score finds a cave entrance nearby.

C1: THE ENTRANCE

The mouth of the cave is a curious piece of theatre. Mortal hands have certainly touched the place. The ice is carved into dwellings—huts and chambers laboriously scoured from its freezing substance. Elsewhere, materials have been hauled in to build huts and lean-tos. There are the ashes of old fires. Mortals have dwelled here, and recently.

It is enough to give a living traveler hope and drive devils to a rage. In either case, the idea is to draw the traveler inwards and downwards. From the depths of the cave can be heard faint sounds: the echo of voices, confused and distorted. The caves are occupied; the dwellers at the threshold have retreated deeper into the ice to escape Stygia's harsh climate. And the caves truly are warmer, a little. Enough that meltwater is constantly flowing into them, carving runnels on the floor and trickling inwards so that all the caves resound to the music of it, further confusing the suggestion of life and voices from below. The keen-eyed visitor might feel that signs of habitation at the cave-mouth seem oddly shallow and staged but by then it may be too late. Every visitor drawn to the cave mouth feels a powerful fascination with the depths, a need to know what is down there, the certainty that what they seek can be found below. Those equipped with divinatory magic may discover that the ubiquitous infernal taint of the Nine Hells really is weaker here, and perhaps mistake that for virtue. In truth there is only ever a choice of evils.

C2: CONGREGATION OF GJAAKI

Progressing downwards from the abandoned structures at the cave mouth the visitor finds a maze of twisting ice tunnels, slippery with the constant run of meltwater, and from this point they're observed. The heedless or weary visitor will just stumble deeper and deeper, but more careful explorers find upward-sloping spurs to the caves that lead to larger spaces clawed out from the ice. Here dwell the first of the Chasm's inhabitants, the Congregation of Gjaaki.

The ice around you creaks and groans and the sound echoes frightfully in the cold, still darkness of the caves. There is no cutting blizzard wind, but the chill of the caves is a heavy thing. The cold pushes down until your throat aches and your bones feel stiff and strange. If you hold your breath and listen, you think you might hear movement in the shadows.

How kuo-toa even reached the Nine Hells is unknown to scholars, but they dwell here in some numbers, farming albino fish in shallow pools and constructing for themselves a truly byzantine mythology. The Congregation are pallid, eyeless, and stealthy, stealing about the upper passages of the Chasm and sporadically descending on visitors, mortal and devil alike, to claim sacrifices for their complex pantheon of gods. Their theology is entirely unique, quite separate from their usual deities. They worship that which lies deeper within the caves and have constructed a whole idiolectic myth-cycle to account for their presence in the Chasm, which they see as the center of a cold and uncaring universe. They make pilgrimages into the depths, sacrifice each other or those that fall into their hands, and conduct meaningless rituals according to nonsensical texts carved into the ice. Sometimes their artisans venture to the cave mouth and create another fake ice dwelling to add to the lure of the caves.

The Congregation is deranged and murderous, but luckier visitors might happen upon them when their bloodlust has been sated, or when their ritual calendar prescribes periods of contemplation. In times like these their philosophers are only too happy to talk about their beliefs for hours and hours, to the degrading sanity of their listeners.

The Congregation consists of three dozen **kuo-toa monitors** and a trio of **kuo-toa archpriests**. The kuo-toa are in a period of contemplation and therefore peaceful, if not attacked. However, they're so deranged that they provide scarce information and the characters would need to spend considerable time moving between the various tunnels to encounter all of them. If a kuo-toa is attacked here, it summons all its brethren to defend it. If the entire kuo-toa populace in this area is slain, the characters recover 8,000 gp worth of various gems and other valuables.

THE BLIND BELIEVERS

The kuo-toa living in the chasm have blindsight out to a range of 60 feet and resistance to cold damage.

RANDOM TEMPTATIONS

If the characters attack the kuo-toa and then spend considerable time searching or exploring this part of the cave system, roll on the Random Temptations table from chapter 2.

C3: THE ECHOES

Below, the tunnels twine and corkscrew downwards. In these reaches, travelers might encounter Congregation pilgrims trekking towards their ultimate religious experience, or sometimes fugitive devils—**ice devils** and **pain devils** (see appendix B)—drawn into the caves seeking mortals to torment or escaping more powerful devils. Most common, though, are the Echoes. Read the following:

The ice itself contains movement, even as the air carries phantom sounds. There are flickers of motion, ahead, below, to either side. Figures you can never catch up with, the faces of lost friends and family, treasures, beckoning hands. The very ice of the walls is shot through with an ephemeral life that, like the water, is constantly heading further down.

Each time a character attempts to move past an Echo (a location marked as C3 on the map), in the direction of the surface of Stygia, they must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. If they fail the saving throw, they gain a level of exhaustion and fall (they now have the prone condition). They may repeat the saving throw each hour.

Phylactery of the Oathbreaker. The oathbreaker finds their soul imprisoned among the Echoes in the ice when they, and any companions, see a pre-adolescent reflection of themself begging for mercy. Other reflections, devils in the guise of four children, are tormenting the character's soul relentlessly. To save the soul, characters must break through the ice and enter the Echo. This requires an action and, when the first character is inside, they find themselves in a 60-foot diameter chamber, surrounded by ice. The bullies transform into four **chain devils** surrounding the child (a **commoner**). The devils attack the characters.

Whenever a character starts their turn inside the Echo, they take 5 (1d10) cold damage. Additionally, at initiative count 20 of round 4, any surviving devils seemingly transform back into children (but they retain all their devil statistics). If a devil in child's form is slain, it vanishes and reappears at the start of the next round, fully healed. At initiative count 20 of round 5, the enemies transform back into devils and this process repeats every 4 rounds.

During this combat, if the oathbreaker's soul is slain, it reappears at the start of the oathbreaker's next turn, but an **affliction devil** (see appendix B) appears next to the oathbreaker, to assist the other devils in battle. These devils can be permanently slain only while they wear their own form. Once all the devils are defeated the echo of the oathbreaker's younger self vanishes and leaves the phylactery in its place.

Now in possession of their soul, the character must escape the ice. However, the longer the characters were inside the Echo, the thicker the ice around them has grown. Every time a devil transformed into a child, the ice-chamber was pulled deeper into the Echo, and another 10 feet of ice grew between the chamber and the original entrance into the Echo. Each 10-foot section must be destroyed as if it were created by the *Wall of Ice* spell.

C4: ANGEL OF THE ICE

The cave is large, with a floor that has been worn smooth. There is faint light here, and it illuminates a wide wall of ice covered in complex and disturbing diagrams. Before the mural on the wall stands a many-eyed being of bizarre form, as pale and cold as the ice. Its voice is like the grinding sound of an iceberg shattering. Loud. Violent. Powerful. All around it sit kuo-toa, chattering their teeth and slapping the ground, their eyeless faces warped with fanatic adoration for what their Angel of Ice preaches.

Like any religion, the Congregation has heretics to persecute. Separate caves hold a smaller community of dissidents led by the Angel of the Ice (lawful evil **deva**). This fallen Celestial claims to have been sent to the Chasm to reclaim it from the Nine Hells and build a gateway to the higher realms, preparatory to ushering in a vast army to cleanse all the lower planes. It is just as deluded as the Congregation, dwelling before a mirror-like wall of ice on which it has scratched out a vastly complex diagram that it says holds the secret to the movements and future of the planes.

Defenders of the Faith. The Angel is attended by a cult of kuo-toa that it has attempted to reshape into something more holy, resulting in a curious admixture of aasimar-like qualities into its brood. There are a dozen of these heretics (**kuo-toa monitors**) that can change the damage type of their attacks to radiant damage). Each heretic carries 2d20 gp.



A STATUE OF THE ANGEL OF THE ICE.

If the ice wall, or the *Holy Avenger* within it, is disturbed for any reason, the following occurs:

Immediately all activity and sound ceases in the ice-shrouded cavern and, as if of one mind, the Angel and their cult of kuo-toa, turn towards you. There is no more chattering, no more grinding. Just a silence colder than the frigid air swirling about you. The Angel points their finger at you, shakes their head, and then resumes their strange oration.

This was a warning. Any further attempts to desecrate the temple turns the entire group hostile to the characters and they attack.

Conclave (Paladin)—Holy Avenger. The Angel of Ice eventually found themselves incapable of wielding their *Holy Avenger* and so they ensconced it in the ice. Just the hilt sticks out now and anyone examining the diagram on the wall easily notices it. It requires two successful consecutive DC 18 Strength (Athletics) checks to pull the sword from the ice. Each check requires an action.

Phylactery of the Business Partner. The business partners' greed in life knew no bounds, as the character searching for his soul knows only too well. The business partner desired riches and he did not want to share them with anyone. The character looking for their former business partner's phylactery finds it here with the Angel of the Ice.

If the character examines the mural closely, they soon realize its importance when they recognize a tiny figure trapped inside. The business partner is wandering the Celestial's mazelike diagram. Their torture is one of endless frustration, believing that within they can find riches grander than any they ever possessed in life. They're consumed by the desperate need to attain them. However, every corner they turn leads to a dead end and is populated with a new horror that will gladly consume their flesh. Once consumed they pop up again at another point on the mural.

The characters must destroy the mural (AC 12, 100 hit points) but the Angel and its cult attack them, as described earlier. Once the mural has been destroyed the phylactery of the business partner appears on the floor. The character takes possession of the phylactery and gains the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

C5: THE ABOLETH

There is a dripping sound in the cold tunnels. The space around you feels emptier, the walls have pulled away and the caves that lie ahead are vast and full of lakes of ink-dark water. The dripping sound comes from droplets of meltwater rolling off the distant ice-ceiling and striking the liquid depths below. You occasionally see ripples break the glass-still surface, as though something very large were moving beneath it.

At last, the caves begin to open out. A network of interconnected lakes collects the meltwater, each lake vast and lightless. Here dwell the aboleth, each the master of its own circumscribed domain, each a minor deity in the Congregation's tangled pantheon. Chuul servitors act as guards and food in times of need, and the lake bottoms are a sifting morass of bones and forgotten treasures brought by devils and mortals alike who got no further. But even this is merely a station on the way down. For each hour the characters search they have a 75 percent chance of finding an aboleth clutch (one **aboleth** and 2d6 **chuul** protectors). This chance is reduced by 25 percent for each clutch found.

Treasure. Once a clutch is dealt with, the characters find 6d4 x 100 gp and two uncommon magic items from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Conclave (Artificer)—Manual of Golems (Iron). A character searching for the *Manual of Golems* (iron) discovers it in the clutches of the first aboleth they encounter.

C6: KEEPER OF FOUND THINGS

Below you stretches the greatest gulf, the Chasm itself, with a craggy iciced ceiling above and only the waters below. To either side a ledge extends, overlooking the subterranean sea and running to the very end of the Chasm. Echoes in the walls beckon for you to continue down the ledge. A whisper inside your head tells you that the Keeper of Found Things has been expecting you.

What is the Keeper of Found Things? Not a devil, certainly. Something ancient that has dwelled in the Chasm and tended its collection for longer than infernal records have been kept. A thing of the shadows that even the keenest eyes can never quite make out in detail or gain a complete picture of. Rambling accounts speak of too many arms, long-fingered hands, a twisted wedge of a head with a vertical mouth bristling with needle teeth. And a



voice. A quiet, reasonable (so very reasonable) voice that speaks to mortals about salvation, rest, and peace—all the promises that lured them down into the caves past all those other tribulations. To forlorn devils, the Keeper instead whispers of a great and endless order, a perfect moment of torment perpetually prolonged. The Keeper has only terrible things to say, and yet it is hideously persuasive. Every moment of the journey through the caves goes to prepare its visitors to accept its blandishments. The Congregation's nonsense theology, the Echoes, the tentacled monsters thrashing blindly in the depths, all plant the seeds of surrender in the mind.

Within the icy walls of the Chasm everything that has filtered down to the Keeper over the long years is buried. There are treasures that have washed down with the meltwater or that have been brought by great heroes and devils. There are monsters, trapped forever—dimly glimpsed against the strange flat light that emanates from every direction. And there are the mortals and devils, hundreds of them, who came this far and no farther. Who couldn't resist the soft entreaties of the Keeper. Here is rest and peace and an endless perfect cruelty. Over time the ice draws its captives deeper, to become the most recent prizes the Keeper claims. Anyone who travels to the end of the Chasm must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. A creature that fails the save begins to be enveloped by the ice and has the restrained condition. The restrained creature must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn, becoming encased in ice on a failed save or pulling free on a successful one. Anyone encased in ice takes 19 (3d12) cold damage at the start of each of their turns. They can be freed by destroying the surrounding ice, which has AC 13, 40 hit points,

vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

For those of stronger will, the ice itself reaches for them. The Keeper reshapes the very stuff of the Chasm to entrap less compliant victims by drawing forth frozen golems, gleaming facets flickering with echoes drawn from their victims' past. The luckiest might find their way back to the caves, to struggle against the slope and the water, braving all the perils they've already passed for the dubious safety of Stygia's surface. Others, in desperation, might fly or climb upwards out of the reach of the Keeper's influence, or plunge into the waters of the freezing sea below.

Treasure. For each hour spent at this location excavating valuables, select a very rare magic item from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (excluding weapons). However, all characters participating must repeat the earlier Constitution saving throw, or suffer the negative effects described earlier. Additionally, for each character failing their saving throw, a frozen golem (**iron golem** with immunity to cold) emerges and attacks.

Deathstalkers—True-Ice Shards. A character searching for one of the *True-Ice Shards* sees it lodged in the ice at the end of the chasm. If they touch the shard while still encased in the ice, they take 17 (5d6) cold damage and must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. If they fail, they can't let go of the object and the ice starts enveloping them. The character takes 17 (5d6) cold damage at the start of each turn that they're still holding the shard, but doesn't repeat the saving throw.

They can only dislodge the shard with fire damage, any cold damage makes the ice enveloping the shard grow thicker. Once 50 fire damage is applied the shard comes free.

C7: THE AWFUL FISHER

The ceiling is full of deep crevices and covered in sharp, reaching icicles. You can almost make a game of following the patterns of creeping shadows they cast. They seem nearly alive, the shadows, slinking over the jagged surface as the light below moves. Sometimes it seems the shadows shift out of time with the light. Yes. It's strange. Near the ceiling, you notice one of the shadows, a large one, is moving very quickly. Much quicker than the rest around it. The shadow is coming right at you. You can hear it now. Many legs, clicking over the ice and the terrible snapping sound of giant, hungry claws.

The ceiling offers the most mundane of fates. It has one inhabitant, that has scavenged from the Keeper's leavings since time immemorial. It is known to the kuo-toa as the **Awful Fisher** (see accompanying stat block). Those who fly or scramble upwards from the Keeper's grotesque collection find a great many-legged thing watching them, letting fly with a long, sticky thread. Nothing more than a preternaturally large cave fisher, in fact; those crablike creatures that bedevil the mortal Underdark. The Awful Fisher has grown vast and cunning on a diet of infernal flesh over the ages, though, given most of those who fly into its reach are devils. It is eternally hungry, malevolent, and armored beyond the bite of most blades. After the Awful Fisher dies, it falls to area C6 and the corpse begins to freeze over as described in that section.

Treasure. Once slain, the contents of the Awful Fisher's stomach may contain some treasures. If searched, select two uncommon magic items from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Conclave (Cleric)—Rod of Resurrection. A character searching for the *Rod of Resurrection* discovers it in the belly of the Awful Fisher. During the battle with it, the bizarre creature accidentally triggers the *Heal* property of the rod the first time it falls under 100 hit points. Any nearby cleric feels a rush of divine power emanating from within the Monstrosity when this occurs. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check allows a character to locate the Awful Fisher's corpse, and the rod, before the creature becomes completely encased in ice.

C8: GJAAKI

And the waters? Nobody has ever returned from the waters. The kuo-toa Congregation's greatest deity, Gjaaki, resides there, a being of utter negation, an anti-creator. They say that all things that it becomes aware of cease to be and fade from the memory of the universe. Their myths speak of heroes who never were, offered up in proof of the power of this god. Of

course, the Congregation are utterly divorced from reality and nothing they say can be taken seriously. But something is down there that even the Keeper and the aboleths don't speak about, beyond the knowledge of devils and the powers of the Nine Hells.

AWFUL FISHER

Gargantuan Monstrosity, Unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 348 (24d20 + 96)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +10

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +9, Survival +6

Senses blindsight 120 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +6

Flammable Blood. If the fisher drops below 200 hit points, it gains vulnerability to fire damage.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the fisher fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Spider Climb. The fisher can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fisher makes two Claw attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.
Hit: 20 (4d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Retract Filament. One Huge or smaller creature grappled by the fisher's Adhesive Filament must make a DC 20 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is pulled into an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the fisher, and the fisher makes one Claw attack against it with advantage. Anyone else who was attached to the filament is released. Until the grapple ends on the target, the fisher can't use Adhesive Filament.

BONUS ACTIONS

Adhesive Filament. The fisher extends a sticky filament up to 90 feet in a straight line, which adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature the filament adheres to has the grappled condition (escape DC 20), and ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage. The filament can be attacked (AC 16; 25 hit points; immunity to poison and psychic damage). A weapon that fails to sever it becomes stuck to it, requiring an action and a successful DC 20 Strength check to pull free. Destroying the filament deals no damage to the fisher. The filament crumbles away if the fisher takes this bonus action again.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The fisher can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The fisher regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slash. The fisher makes a Claw attack.

Spit. The fisher uses Adhesive Filament.

Reel In. The fisher uses Retract Filament.



THE SIGN OF THE HAG'S ARMS OFFERS LITTLE RESPITE
TO WEARY TRAVELERS FROM OUTSIDE THE NINE HELLS.

CHAPTER 8

Malbolge, the Realm of Decay



RACTICALLY INFINITE MOUNTAIN SLOPES and falling boulders make up Malbolge, the sixth layer of the Nine Hells. It was once ruled by Malagard, the Hag Countess, who has since been replaced by Asmodeus's daughter Glasya. Prior to her rule, the layer was almost entirely stone, with very little distinguishing features. However, due to a curse placed upon Malagard, her body grew to a grotesque size and imploded when Glasya took over. Now Malbolge is decorated with pieces of her corpse, a marriage between a rotting carcass and a cliff-face. What little pockets of devil civilization remain do so in caves carved from the mountain or inside fortresses supported by indestructible pillars.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN MALBOLGE

d6 Encounter

- 1 There is a terrible shaking as the earth nearby splits apart and a broad-faced beast, as large as a dragon but wingless, erupts, a mouthful of rocks and gems falling from its mouth. It is a **miasmorne** (see appendix B) burrowing through the Nine Hells, in search of metal and magic to devour.
- 2 Inside a small, fortified structure is a **corruption devil** (see appendix B). It hates Glasya's rule and believes it can revive the Hag Countess.
- 3 A **maelephant nomad** (see appendix B), driven slightly insane by its extended lifespan, searches the ruins for something to guard. When it sees the characters, there is a 50 percent chance it goes into a frenzy and attacks.
- 4 A patrol of six **erinyes** search for any remaining influence from the Hag Countess. They reward anyone with information relevant to their search with 2,500 gp, and attack hags and their allies on sight.
- 5 An invisible **orthon** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) has been stalking the characters for some time. There is a 75 percent chance it attacks them now. Otherwise, it moves on, searching for its quarry.
- 6 Massive tremors shake the earth, causing an avalanche of rocks to plummet down. Each creature in the path of the rocks must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage.

RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Malbolge Overview” section. It provides you with everything you need to guide your players across this bloated and decaying landscape. Use the information provided to set the scene during their travels through Malbolge.

ENCOUNTERS

The denizens of Malbolge are divided in their loyalties but united in their fear and disarray over the changed landscape. If the characters are wandering far and wide, roll on the Random Encounters in Malbolge table to determine what they might encounter.

LOCATIONS

The characters must seek out The Sign of the Hag’s Arms, an inn and tavern, but no safe haven for mortals. There they may discover some of what they seek. The “Key Locations in Malbolge” section provides additional details about other locations in this layer.

KOH TAM

Ensure that Koh Tam is urgent in directing the characters to The Sign of the Hag’s Arms. He can also provide useful information about some of the other locations herein, though he doesn’t believe what the characters seek can be found anywhere other than the inn.

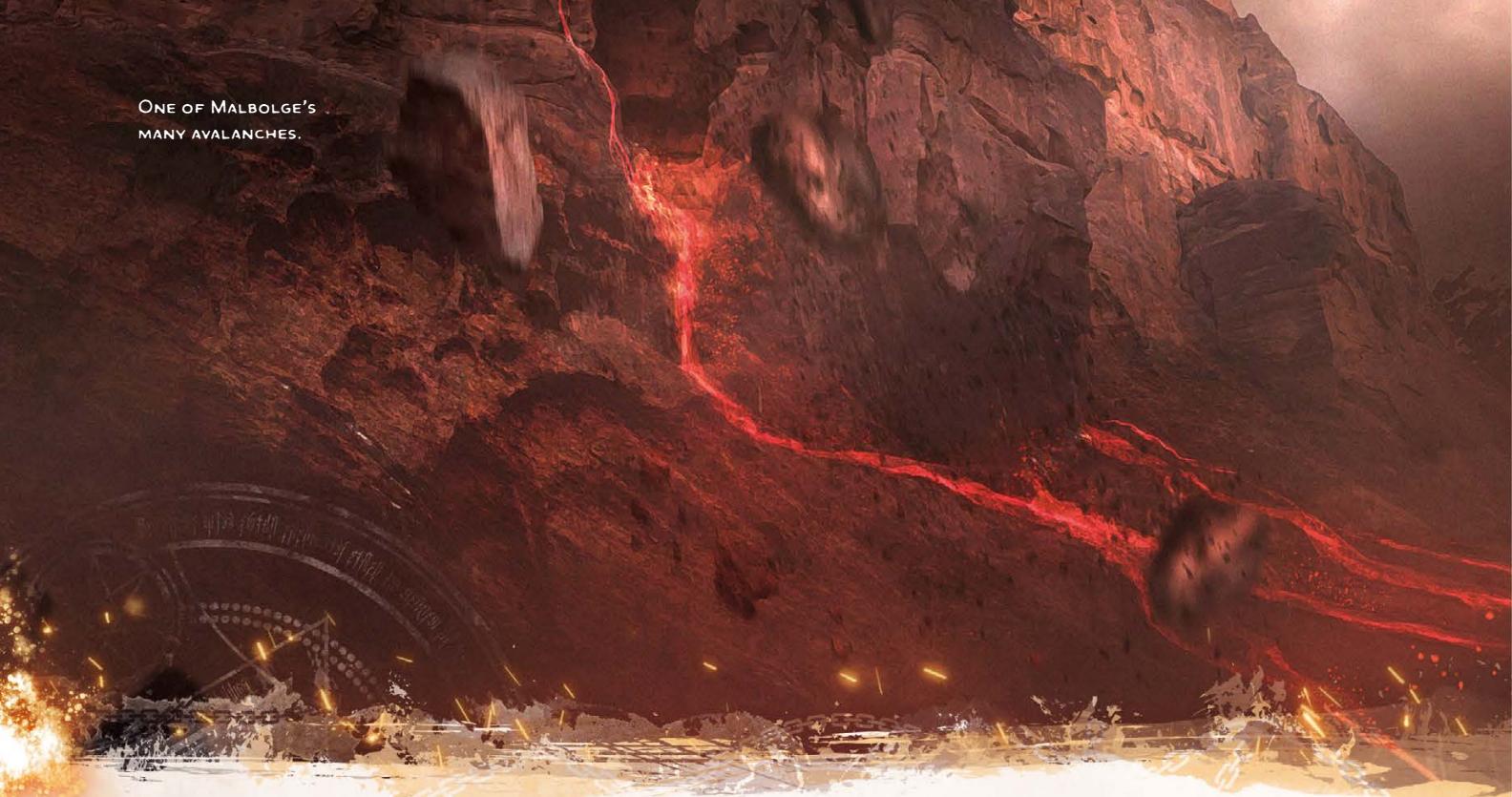
OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your player’s objectives and lead them to the corresponding areas to ensure they can complete their goals.

These objectives can be attained in Malbolge:

OBJECTIVES IN MALBOLGE

Objective	Location
The phylactery of the mentor	The Sign of the Hag’s Arms: The Formian Queen
The phylactery of the heartless master	The Sign of the Hag’s Arms: The Kitchens of Irabella
The phylactery of the mother	The Sign of the Hag’s Arms: Irabella’s Workshops
<i>The Scourge of Shadow</i>	The Sign of the Hag’s Arms: Anacreda the Angelmaker



ONE OF MALBOLGE'S
MANY AVALANCHES.

TEMPTATIONS

Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Malbolge. You can of course have them encounter more if you want. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

MALBOLGE OVERVIEW

Malbolge is considered the most dangerous stretch of the River Styx. Due to rockslides and erosion, boulders and rock formations sit within the river, changing in shape and location each day. Parts of the river mix with acid and blood from Malagard's remains, creating a toxic soup that dissolves the hulls of unprepared boats and devours anything thrown overboard in seconds. Should a captain survive all these hazards, they must navigate through a claustrophobic canyon with steep walls, where the incline eventually levels out and empties into Maladomini.

The surface of Malbolge is nightmarish—an already treacherous landscape is made more dangerous by the remains of the hag queen. Throughout the layer exist forests where the trees resemble hairs of a gargantuan beast, and caustic lakes of strange substances. Her sometimes-slippery sometimes-sticky blood covers large swathes of Malbolge. Massive bones, some shattered and some intact, create artificial structures across the land, with pieces of teeth and cartilage sticking out like grotesque obelisks.

Hoping to survive the trials of the layer more easily, devils constructed an intricate labyrinth of tunnels connecting the cities together. Much of the

realm's inhabitants navigate the tunnels, expanding and creating new pathways and connections. Some believe Glasya plans to construct entire cities underground, though such plans would take centuries to complete.

Before the Hag Countess ruled, Moloch claimed ownership of the realm. When Asmodeus grew tired of his tricks, he appointed Malagard, and in so doing cursed her with an insatiable hunger. She ate devils and the souls of the damned; her body grew over decades, but her position as Malbolge's ruler kept her alive. When Glasya was appointed ruler of Malbolge, the blessing expired, and Malagard's mountainous bulk exploded in a shower of flesh and gore that covered much of the layer. Many of the hags that called Malbolge home left, leaving Glasya's subjects small in number.

LEAVING MALBOLGE

Like Avernus, Malbolge contains a few exits to the layer below, though none are easy. While the Styx is an option, only the most experienced captains can navigate the dangerous rapids. Devils native to the layer claim the labyrinth of tunnels has a passage leading to Maladomini, though without a guide such a passage would be difficult to traverse. Even so, with the dangers of the Styx, many opt for the caverns.

FEATURES

The remains of the Hag Countess poison the entire layer, including visitors. Good-aligned creatures have vulnerability to poison damage while in Malbolge, even if they would normally have resistance or

immunity. Non-good creatures have their resistance and immunity removed, but don't suffer vulnerability.

In addition to the poisoned air of the layer, creatures also feel drained the longer they stay in the realm. Each time a creature that isn't a Celestial or Fiend finishes a long rest, they must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. If they fail, they have disadvantage on all saving throws until they leave Malbolge.

KEY LOCATIONS IN MALBOLGE

While the characters are making their way to The Sign of the Hag's Arms, they may want to take a small detour through the other locations found in Malbolge.

OSSIEA

Above ground, a few locations were built upon the grotesque remnants of Malagard's body, the parts that survived the cataclysm. These pieces of her enormous, bloated body are still relatively intact and serve as gruesome landmarks. Among these, the characters may choose to visit Ossiea. This fortress is found near the Hair Forest and built into the skull of Malagard, her empty unseeing eye sockets covered by tall sheets of red glass. Ossiea

TEMPTATION OF PRIDE

"A Thing of Beauty"

Whilst rummaging the stalls around the city, the character with the lowest Charisma is approached by a devil who offers to sell them an amulet of great power for 600 gp. This is an *Amulet of Appearance* (see appendix D) and if the character initially declines the purchase, the charming devil insists the character tries it on before deciding. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals it to be a magic amulet but not that it is cursed. If the character tries the amulet on, they transform. Any blemishes and imperfections vanish, they've never looked better. Audible gasps of approval can be heard from onlookers who see the transformation take place.

is the capital of the realm and current home of Glasya and her subordinates. Glasya is obsessed with beauty, and the city around her reflects this. The shops the characters visit here are stacked with magical cosmetics, intricate jewelry, and beautiful garments.

MAGGOTH THYG

Near the bottom of the layer also lies Maggoth Thyg, a mysterious cavern from which no creature ever returns. Even the devils native to Malbolge fear



RANDOM TEMPTATIONS

If the characters decide to go in search of Maggoth Thyg despite the obvious perils, have them venture for four hours towards a cavern system at the bottom of Malbolge. When they get close to the area where they expect to find the cave, the ground is scattered with corpses. If they insist on venturing at least another hour further, roll on the Random Temptations table from chapter 2.

Maggoth Thyg, claiming it has existed far longer than the Nine Hells. The characters should know to be wary of a location that even the denizens of the Nine Hells are fearful of.

THE SIGN OF THE HAG'S ARMS

Another landmark utilizing Malagard's remains in its construction is the Sign of the Hag's Arms. This multi-leveled structure rises out from the ground near a place where many tunnels and thoroughfares cross paths. One of the hag's dismembered arms serves as a gruesome marker for this location, which Koh Tam deems the most likely to house what the characters seek.

ADVENTURE: THE SIGN OF THE HAG'S ARMS

The Hag's Arms is run by hags, of course, the entrepreneurs of the lower planes. There are three of them, as is traditional, each with her own specialty, each a powerful magician beyond the regular dreams of her kind. Irabella runs the inn and kitchen, the night hag Malacki tinkers on hideous creations in her underground workshops, and Anacreda the Angelmaker is the coven's undisputed leader.

When the characters first enter Malbolge, Koh Tam or Tiax impart the following knowledge about the layer to them:

Koh Tam explains the windswept and endless slopes of this new layer of the Nine Hells, "In Malbolge there is no level ground, but always the strength-sapping slog of up or down, and the going is riven with crevasses and the colossal, eternal remains of Malagard, the former ruler of this layer, constantly festering but never decaying away."

"There are tunnels, lairs for such fauna as calls Malbolge home: the insects and spiders with their kin, in swarms and of huge size. Some say they were spawned from the corruption of Malagard's vast fleshy diaspora. The things have adapted their natural weapons and strategy to prey on fiends, though they will take mortals gladly."

He toes a clump of profane soil, releasing numerous scuttling insects that flee into the dirt below and then continues, "But those, devil, or mortal, who lament the cheerless character of the plane should dampen their enthusiasm when the Sign of the Hag's Arms comes into sight. Hospitality is to be had there, it's true, but not every guest who enters its doors has the luxury of checking out again."

ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam's advice to the characters is as follows:

- They should visit The Sign of the Hag's Arms, where they might start looking for answers. But he warns them: the hags are powerful adversaries.
- They should avoid going to Maggoth Thyg, he has heard many stories about those caves and none of them ended well.

THE SIGN OF THE HAG'S ARMS LOCATIONS

Some of the major locations found in and around the inn are described below.

S1: THE SWARM

You stand upon the lower slopes of a great uprising of earth. A well-worn path curves upwards but a fetid mist hangs low, allowing only the murky outline of a building crouching upon the hilltop above. Closer to you there appear to be numerous, less-worn paths, leading into various crevices and small canyons.

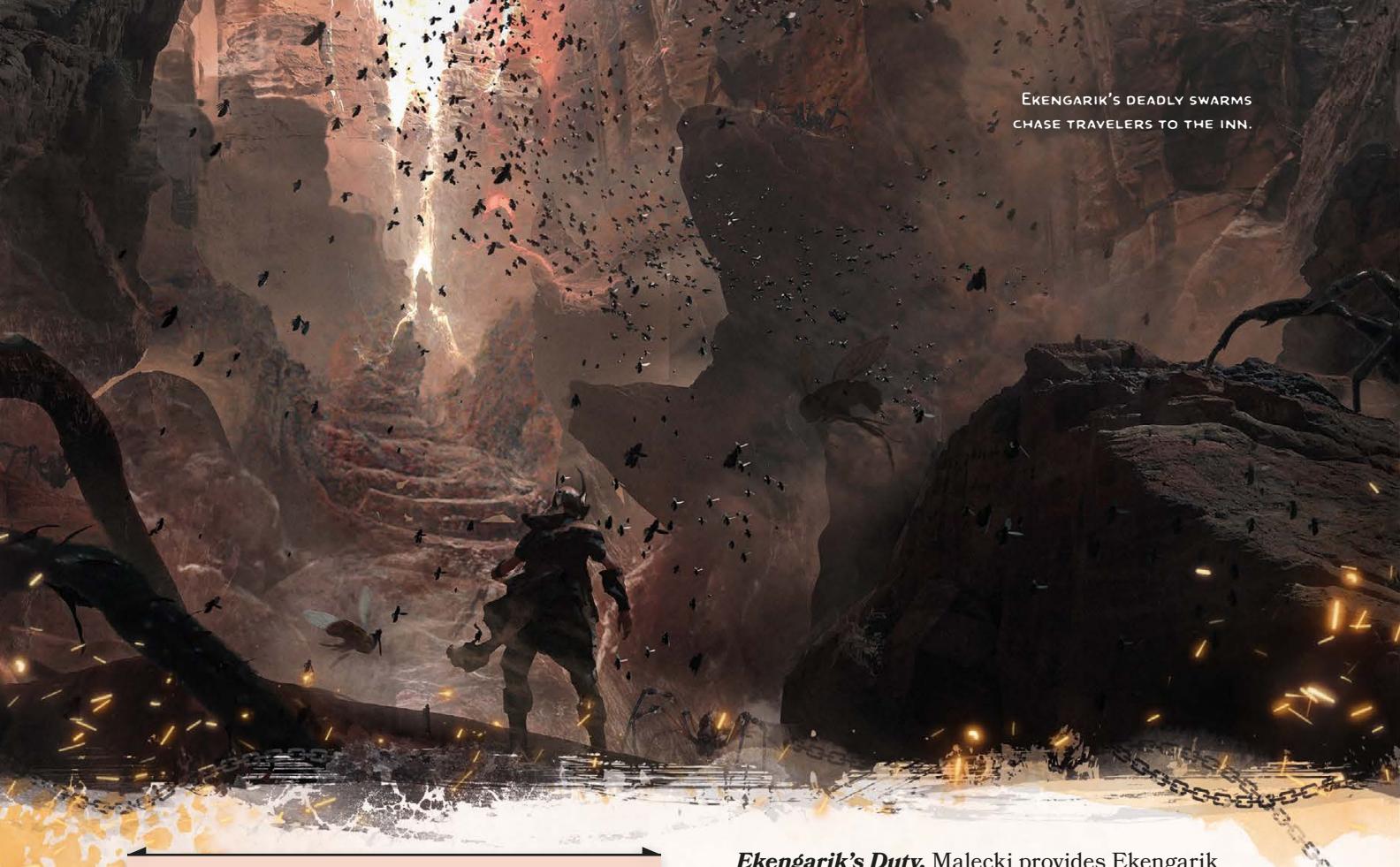
The inn sits at a confluence of chasm and tunnel thoroughfares between infernal fortresses, in a particularly perilous region of the plane. Perilous more for Fiends than for travelers from outside the lower planes. From long feeding on the toxic flesh of Malagard—perhaps helped along by the tinkering of the inn's proprietors—the local life has developed some potent weapons to deploy against devils. In place of the regular poisons that Fiends are immune to, many species of **giant scorpions** and **giant spiders** inject acid with their stingers and fangs, or even more bizarre fluids that sear like the radiant touch of angels, rendering down fiendish flesh into a readily ingestible soup.

The tumultuous air above isn't safe either, as flights of **ayperobo swarms** (see appendix B) issue from their crevice nests, eager to devour prey. Those devils tasked to take messages and goods through the region of the inn always hurry to take shelter

THE SIGN OF THE HAG'S ARMS

1 square = 5 feet





CORRUPTED INSECTS

Any giant insects encountered in Malbolge deal acid damage instead of poison damage and each of their attacks deals an additional 4 (1d8) radiant damage. These insects also have resistance to acid, poison, and fire damage.

there, no matter the risks, and mortal travelers would be advised to do the same.

Ekengarik's Swarms. Approaching travelers are set upon by 2d6 **giant scorpions** and 2d6 **giant spiders** that crawl out from the various crevices around them. If the characters take to the air, an **ayperobo swarm** (see appendix B) joins the battle. The insects don't pursue if the characters climb the hill towards the inn.

S2: EKENGARIK'S HIVE

You notice numerous gashes on stone outcroppings, crevices, and the ground itself, that apparently form the entrance to tunnels, leading into a darkness below. Peering into an opening, you see a network of tunnels and chambers illuminated by a soft, pulsing glow and hear the faint sound of scraping and digging. The tunnels are lined with hardened earth, and seemingly form a complex labyrinthine network. The air is thick and humid, carrying the scent of dirt and decay.

Ekengarik's Duty. Malecki provides Ekengarik with ever more noxious underlings to serve her hive, and she in turn ensures that travelers in the locale are 'encouraged' to visit the inn, and those trying to escape without paying their due meet a sorry end. It was Ekengarik that sent the swarm of insects towards the characters earlier. **Ekengarik** (see accompanying stat block) wants to drive the characters to the inn, but her patience is limited. Keep track of this by using a counter. The counter starts at 1 if the giant insects have been slain, zero otherwise, and for each hour the characters spend in the hive, and each time a fiendish formian is slain, it increases by +1. Once this counter reaches 6, Ekengarik uses *Dimension Door* and attacks, generally starting battle with *Prismatic Wall* to separate the characters from going deeper into her hive. If at any point the characters retreat, she allows them.

Treasure. Most corridors in the hive are 5 feet wide, 10 feet tall, and extend in stretches for 50-90 feet before turning sharply. A variety of stones, wooden debris, and various items collected over the years, has been partly cemented into the tunnel walls. As long as the hive isn't disturbed, characters may search for treasure in the hive. For each hour spent searching roll a d10. If the result is 10, 1d4 **fiendish formians** (see accompanying stat block) attack, the hive is considered disturbed, and no more treasure can be acquired here. Otherwise, the characters find 2d4 x 100 gp and 1d4 uncommon magic items from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Phylactery of the Mentor. If one of the characters has ventured into the Nine Hells to find the soul of their mentor, their attention is caught by an imp constrained at the outer edges of Ekenigarik's hive. This area is less heavily populated with the swarming creatures and the characters can try and sneak closer. The imp is the prisoner of a **fiendish formian** taskmaster. Over and over again his energy is painfully sucked out of him to

EKENGARIK

Large Fiend, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 231 (22d10 + 110)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	16 (+3)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Cha +10

Skills Deception +10, Insight +8, Persuasion +10

Damage Resistances acid, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Formian, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Hive Mind. All **fiendish formians** within 1 mile of Ekengarik can telepathically communicate with each other and Ekengarik.

Regeneration. Ekengarik regenerates 10 hit points at the start of her turn, unless she took radiant damage in the last round.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ekengarik makes three Bite attacks. She can replace one of the attacks with an Acid Spray (if available) attack or a use of Spellcasting.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target's Strength score is reduced by 2 (1d4). The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

Acid Spray (Recharge 5-6). Ekengarik spits acid at one creature within 60 feet of her, or two creatures within 60 feet of her and 5 feet of each other. Targets must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 33 (6d10) acid damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.

Spellcasting. Ekengarik casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18):

At will: *Detect Magic, Dispel Magic, Heroism, Magic Missile*
1/day each: *Black Tentacles, Cone of Cold, Confusion, Dimension Door, Geas, Invisibility, Prismatic Wall, Slow*

REACTIONS

Hardened Carapace (Recharge 4-6). When hit with an attack, Ekengarik temporarily hardens her carapace, reducing her speed to 0 and increasing her AC by 5 until the start of her next turn.

sustain the taskmaster that controls him. Once the imp collapses in exhaustion the taskmaster moves away, coming back for more once he needs sustenance again. The imp is in truth the character's old mentor transformed to undergo this torment. To rescue them the character has to defeat the formian that is treating their old master as a snack. Preferably without alerting the entire hive. If the characters take more than four rounds to slay the taskmaster another 1d4 **fiendish formians** join the fray.

Once the characters have killed the formians read the following:

The imp hangs limply in his chains, overcome with exhaustion. As you approach it, the imp's body starts to shake violently. As abruptly as the spasms started, they stop. The body sags, seemingly the imp has died. After a few seconds its flesh begins to bubble and evaporate, leaving a phylactery behind.

The character has taken possession of the phylactery of the mentor and gains the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

FIENDISH FORMIAN

Medium Fiend, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +6

Skills Acrobatics +4, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Formian

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Hive Mind. All **fiendish formians** within 1 mile of Ekengarik can telepathically communicate with each other and Ekengarik.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fiendish formian makes two Claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target's Strength score is reduced by 1. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

ABOVEGROUND INN LOCATIONS

Having survived the perilous journey through the Hive's territory, the characters arrive at the relative safety of the inn.

S3: ENTRANCE

Read the following as the characters approach the inn.

The Sign of the Hag's Arms is well, if bleakly, named. The outer courtyard sits in the crook of one of Malagard's lesser limbs, or at least a recognizable fragment of the same. Within this elbow space the upper level of the inn itself is made entirely from the ancient hag's substance, bones as scaffolding, leathery skin stretched out as a vaned roof, the walls built of tessellated teeth and ragged plates of nails. As a feat of architecture, it is simultaneously impressive and nauseating.

Had the plane's current ruler, Glasya, any respect for her predecessor then doubtless the construction would be counted as deep disrespect. Glasya isn't sentimental, however, and Malbolge offers little else in respect of building material. Even the iron of the infernal fortresses must be hauled in from more productive layers. As with most locations in Malbolge, the inn continues on many levels under the ground. There are always guest rooms to be had, for a price. The proprietors accept a variety of currencies. *Soul Coins*, most commonly, but also magic objects or rare ingredients, given the work all three tend to. Devils passing this way know to bring appropriate recompense for the shelter, but mortals may be dismayed to find that all their gold and gems buy them nothing. However, there are always other options for those visiting from other planes. Not necessarily palatable options.

The characters can purchase lodgings for 1 *Soul Coin* or an uncommon magic item. Then they're taken to their rooms (see area S6).

S4: FEASTING HALL

You aren't certain what the staircase is made of. Every part of the inn seems suspiciously biological in nature, though very dead, and there is an inescapable scent of decay underlying the air. At the top of the staircase lies a long hallway with many doors, the first pair of which are open. Through them you see a great feasting hall with a host of long tables covered in heaps of food. Most of it seems to be meat. There is a cacophonous swarm of devils around the tables, gorging themselves on the strange offerings and shrieking and screaming at each other.

TEMPTATION OF OPPRESSION

"Painful Knowledge"

If the characters decide to rent a room at the inn or find themselves exploring the guest rooms without payment, they find a mirror by the side of the bed. The mirror is a *Sage's Mirror* (see appendix D) and is small enough to carry.

A great feasting hall is found on the first level of the inn, usually hosting at least a score of devils at any given time. They jostle elbows at tables scrimshawed from Malagard's bones and eat from a unique menu. The flesh of Malagard is generally unpalatable even to Fiends, but the inn's proprietors have the knack of transforming it into a delicacy worth the journey—to a devil. Mortals are advised to bring their own lunches unless they have a cast iron immunity to poisons.

The hags are always on the lookout for new business associates, or spare parts for their creations. If at any point the characters want to speak to the owner of the inn, they can ask any of the kobold serving staff. The kobold explains who the three hags are and that they often remain in their workshops in the basement. If the characters ask to speak to the hags directly, the servant leaves to fetch them. Roll on the Dealing with Hags table to determine the result of the request. If the character provides a bribe or incentive to encourage the hag to meet, then add +2 to the roll.

DEALING WITH HAGS

d12 Result

1–2	A kobold servant carries a silver tray with the head of the previous servant on it. The characters are asked to leave the inn.
3–6	The kobold returns and says the hags have declined, but the characters are welcome to meet with them in the basement. The magically locked door at S7, will be open.
7–9	Malecki arrives an hour later in the form of an elf woman and sits down at the character's table. She intends to trick the characters.
10–11	Malecki dematerializes from the Ethereal Plane and appears at the character's table, in her true form, willing to make a deal.
12+	Anacreda emerges from the basement, her wings partly unfurled as she stalks across the floorboards. The feasting hall quiets, many of the devils suddenly staring into their cups, averting their eyes. She stops and looms over the character's table.

S5: KITCHENS

The **kobolds** who staff the inn are routinely maimed, killed by accident, tortured, and even eaten by their employers, especially Irabella. They're very aware that they're the weakest things in all the Nine Hells, more wretched even than lemures, and while nothing keeps them safe from the hags, Irabella takes exception to any guests who take liberties with the staff. Working for her is miserable but better than being cast to the mercies of the Nine Hells. The most potent, sorcerous, and wicked among them ascend to the heady rank of chef and become Irabella's chief hench creatures, petty kitchen tyrants among their own kind.

Phylactery of the Heartless Master. A character searching for the soul of the heartless master finds it in the body of a bullied kobold. Upon glancing around the kitchens the characters notice a wretched looking kobold bent over a stove. It is frantically trying to light it, but the stove remains cold. The kobold is clearly agitated and terrified. The character seeking this phylactery senses they must help this kobold.

The creature explains to the character that it is being tormented by a ruthless **sea hag**. Every day it is tasked with preparing a feast for her, but whatever it tries it is never good enough, and the day ends with the hag inflicting unspeakable punishment on the kobold until it begs for the release of death. But that release never comes. It always awakens again in the kitchens with a fire that won't light and a list of dishes it doesn't know how to prepare.

If the character looks at the names of the dishes, they recognize some of the delicacies that were on offer in Aelvette's kitchens in Dis. The hag desires a meal of candied spider eggs, roasted jackalwere, and boiled shank of minotaur. She arrives once the meal is prepared to sample the dishes.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence check accurately identifies the ingredients. If the characters spent any time in Aelvette's kitchen they have advantage on the roll. They need to search the storage room for the ingredients. 1d6 hours of searching per recipe is needed to supply them with what they need. Once they get cooking the oven continually goes out, but a successful DC 12 Dexterity check allows them to keep it lit. If the character has proficiency with cook's utensils, they add their proficiency bonus to the roll. Upon success the character and the kobold have created a feast even the hag can't fault. Frustrated, she flies into a rage and attacks. The character needs to defeat the hag to free their soul. The kobold doesn't come to their aid during the fight.

Upon killing the hag, the kobold vanishes. In its place the phylactery of the heartless master is standing.

COVEN SPELLCASTING

The three hags that run the inn form a coven that is much more powerful than what is typical. Their coven shared spellcasting ability is as follows:

Shared Spellcasting. While all three members of the hag coven are within 100 feet of one another or within the Sign of the Hags Arms, they can each cast the following spells from the wizard's spell list but must share the spell slots among themselves:

- 1st level (4 slots): *Identify, Ray of Sickness*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *Hold Person, Locate Object*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *Bestow Curse, Counterspell, Lightning Bolt*
- 4th level (3 slots): *Phantasmal Killer, Polymorph*
- 5th level (3 slots): *Contact Other Plane, Scrying*
- 6th level (1 slot): *Eyebite*
- 7th level (1 slot): *Finger of Death*
- 8th level (1 slot): *Feeblemind*
- 9th level (1 slot): *True Polymorph*

For these spells, each hag is a 18th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as her spellcasting ability. The spell save DC is 18, and the spell attack bonus is +10.

S6: GUEST ROOMS

The guest rooms make up most of the upper levels of the inn. The walls seem to be organic and emanate a discomforting warmth. Unfortunately, the narrow corridors make it almost impossible to avoid contact with them. A putrid smell hangs in the air.

The guest rooms themselves are comfortable enough, if one doesn't contemplate the materials used to furnish them. There are six double bedrooms on each level.

BASEMENT LEVELS

Below all of this—the rooms, the hall, the unspeakable kitchens—are the workshops, for the three old women who run the inn have another business they conduct here. Business that draws infernal patrons from every layer of the Nine Hells.

S7: THE BASEMENTS

The work of the hags, when they aren't playing hostess to select visitors, is in the construction of monsters. The secret lies in the flesh of Malagard, which is infinitely dead yet simultaneously bubbling with corrosive and stinking life. Using carefully selected components harvested from the ancient archdevil, adding in parts, pieces, and rare ingredients collected from across the Nine Hells and beyond, they create new beings with independent existence and will. For, while they lack the divine spark that would permit them to create true life, still the carrion flesh of Malagard holds enough vitality